Evaluating a primary prevention program aimed to strengthen developmental assets

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Abstract

This project aims to study the outcomes associated with participation in a school-based primary violence prevention program in the middle school setting. The researcher conducted a case study using recent data from the Violence is NOT the Answer (VINTA)[1] school-based primary prevention program, funded through a Midwestern public school system. VINTA's goal is to increase violence prevention by using a holistic model of enhancing other positive youth developmental factors. The data consists of information from pre and post tests from students' participation in this program and attendance records that track active participation as recorded by the program coordinators at each respective school. The conclusions are drawn from the data provided by VINTA.

This project examines the effects of the VINTA program on youth outcomes. The researcher hypothesizes that students engaged in the VINTA program will gain developmental assets. Ultimately, the researcher hopes that the findings shed light on the types of supports schools need to provide to students in order to reduce youth violence. In particular, this study is relevant because it provides suggestions that can be applicable to the VINTA programs that are established in the elementary and high schools, too. The results of this study are important for identifying what works with VINTA's program and what could be improved; conclusions will indicate how other school-based programs can potentially be successful in addressing youth violence and positive youth development.

[1] This is not the true name of this program. Though the Executive Director consented to this evaluation, the name has been kept classified for privacy reasons.

Background Information

An Overview about Violence in School and its Prevention

Violence in the school setting, though rare, has profound effects on school and neighborhood communities. According to Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2008, a report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), from "July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2007, there were 55 school-associated violent deaths in elementary and secondary schools in the United States" (p. 6). These victims included students, staff, and others who were not classified as either. School-associated violent deaths included those that occurred while the victim was on the way to or from regular sessions at school, or while the victim was attending or traveling to or from an official school-sponsored event (BJS & NCES, 2009). The report indicates that from "July 1, 2006, through June 30, 2007, there were 27 homicides and 8 suicides of school-age youth (ages 5–18) at school" (2009, p. 6). This implies that there are significant violent events occurring at school, which could suggest that school-based programming might be an appropriate means of promoting violence prevention.

During the 2005-2006 school year, approximately 78% of schools experienced at least one violent incident[2] involving crime, 17% experienced at least one serious violent[3] act, 46% experienced at least one theft, and 68% experienced a different variation of crime (BJS & NCES, 2009). In 2006 alone, students from ages 12-18 were victims of over 1.7 million nonfatal crimes occurring at school; this age range is more likely to fall victim to theft at school than away from school. 86% of public schools report at least one serious violent incident, thefts of items valued at a minimum of ten dollars, or other types of crimes; this sums to over 2.2 million crimes in a year, or 46 out of every 1,000 students as victims of violent acts (BJS & NCES, 2009). In regards to other

[2] BJS and NCES define a violent crime as physical attack or fight with a weapon, threat of physical attack with a weapon, and robbery. This includes serious violent crimes as this is a specific subset of violent crime.
[3] BJS and NCES define a serious violent crime as rape, aggravated or sexual assault, or robbery, but these tend to almost always have weapon involvement or threat of using a weapon.

acts of delinquency, 24% of public schools reported bullying as a daily or weekly issue and 22% of all students in grades 9-12 reported being offered, sold or given illegal drugs on school property within the past year.

Of the students who reported being bullied at school in 2007, 79% reported being bullied inside of the school and 9% reported injuries as a result of being bullied (BJS & NCES, 2009). Of these bullied students, 63% reported being bullied once or twice during the year, 21% reported being bullied once or twice a month, 10% reported being bullied once or twice a week and 7% reported being bullied daily (BJS & NCES, 2009). The percentage of students reporting gang presence increased from 21% to 23% between 2005 and 2007.

For purposes of this study, it is important to note that a greater number of violent threats or attacks occurred in urban schools compared to any other area (BJS & NCES, 2009). Though the violence rates have most likely changed since 1997, McCord (1997) reported that urban areas attained a crime rate that is 4-10 times higher than any other geographic region. Within urban schools, 82.3% experience a violent crime, compared to 82.2% of suburban schools, and 72.3% of rural; urban, suburban and rural schools experience violent crimes at the rates of 23.9%, 15.2% and 13.6%, respectively (BJS & NCES, 2009).

According to Eaton et al (2006), students in younger grades, regardless of geographic location, are more prone to carry a gun than students in older grades: 6.2% of 9th graders compared to 4.9% of 11th graders. The occurrence of participating in a physical fight was higher among Black (43.1%) and Latino (41.0%) students than White (33.1%) students. Being in a physical fight was more prevalent among younger grades: 43.5% of 9th graders, 36.6% of 10th graders, 21.6% of 11th graders, and 29.1% of 12th graders. Nationally, 3.6% of students enrolled in a school system had been in one or more physical altercation within the past year that required treatment by a medical

professional (Eaton et al., 2006); the greatest percentage of injuries was derived from the 9th graders.

Physical youth violent behaviors are still of major concern for schools. According to Eaton et al., (2006), participation in a physical fight on school property was highest for Black (16.9%) and Hispanic (18.3%) students compared to White students' participation at 11.6%. In addition, the prevalence of being in a physical altercation on school property occurred more frequently among students in lower grades (18.9% and 14.4% of 9th and 10th graders, respectively) versus higher grades (10.4% and 8.5% of 11th and 12th graders, respectively). Schools are especially concerned that nationally, 6% of students had not gone to school at least once in the past month because they felt unsafe either at school or traveling to and from school. This applies mostly to Black and Hispanic students, at 8.7% and 10.2% respectively, who did not attend school because of safety concerns, compared to the 4.4% of White students who did not attend because of safety concerns (Eaton et al., 2006). The key finding from Eaton et al's (2006) study is that certain risk behaviors, like participating in a physical fight or perceiving school to be an unsafe institution, are more likely to occur among specific subpopulations of students that are best defined by ethnicity/race and grade. That is according to the study, young, minority students are more likely to exhibit violent tendencies and/or be the victims of violence than other subgroups of students.

Though violent tendencies are of primary concern, other risk factors might indicate potential behavioral issues. For example, nationally 16% of high school students reported smoking a cigarette for their first times before reaching the age of 13 (Eaton et al., 2006). In addition, 25.6% of students had drunk alcohol before the age of 13; more Black (27.9%) and Hispanic (29.8%) students had consumed alcohol at this early age compared to White students (23.7%). In addition, 8.7% of the studied sample had tried marijuana for the first time before age 13 and 6.2% of the students had engaged in sexual intercourse for the first time before age 13; in all three of the former

cases, the younger students had a higher prevalence of participating in said activities than the older students (Eaton et al., 2006). These data suggest how we might prevent youth from engaging in these high-risk behaviors. Perhaps the earlier schools teach about risk factors like violence, drug/alcohol consumption and promiscuous sexual activities, the less likely younger adolescents are to engage in these problematic behaviors (see Greenberg, et al., 2003; Hahn et al., 2007; Sink & Rubel, 2001); maybe the key is to educate youth as early as possible about how to make smart and safe decisions. Webster-Stratton (1998) argues that prevention programs can be designed for children at the preschool age[4] if they successfully address aggressive behavior, poor social skills, and academic support.

Schools have thus responded to the high rates of youth violence by implementing violence prevention programs (Hahn et al., 2007). According to the School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS), 83.6% of elementary schools, 83.8% of middle schools and 85% of high schools are required to teach violence prevention (2006). In addition, the study indicates that 85.1% of states and 77.6% of districts fund staff development or offer staff development on violence prevention to health teachers (SHPPS, 2006). SHPPS (2006) also reports that 95.4% of schools providing violence prevention services to their students do so by a mental health and/or social services staff team. Despite the attention violence prevention programming has in the schools, the average teacher only spends a median of four to five hours a year in violence prevention instruction (Hahn et al., 2007). Research shows that long term success of the programs is compromised by the short length of interventions in the home, the community and the classroom (Payton et al., 2000). In order to be successful, primary violence prevention programs must be maintained for multiple, consecutive years and include many approaches to reduce risks and foster resiliency (Payton et al., 2000).

[4] (from page 5) This article mentions that 30%-50% of mothers that are identified as "at-risk" because of income, mental stability, etc, put their young children (preschool to kindergarten) at risk for behavioral problems. These issues would later have potential to grow into violence-related behaviors.

Prevention Programming

According to the Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General (2001), prevention programs are supposed to prevent or reduce violent acts by addressing both risk and protective factors. Though reducing risk does not necessarily reduce violence, reducing risk holds some promise of preventing violence (Satcher, 2001). Statistics reveal that most violence starts during early adolescence, so there is a need for intervening early on in children's lives.

There are two main types of prevention strategies: primary prevention and secondary prevention. While secondary prevention aims to diagnose problems early and hopes to intervene at an appropriate time to prevent more complicated issues, primary prevention strives to reduce the chances that a problem will occur in the first place (Kaplan, 2000). Primary prevention has two purposes: (1) to increase protective factors and developmental assets by promoting resiliency, and (2) to decrease violent behaviors by teaching risk reduction (Taub & Pearrow, 2007). Research suggests that prevention programs that focus on reducing the effects of risk as well as increasing protective factors prove to be the most successful (Kenny, Waldo, Warter, & Batron, 2002).

According to other researchers' studies, primary prevention programming has proven to be very effective. Most researchers agree that the glue to any type of prevention program is to have strong community alliances that maintain relationships between each other; collaboration between communities, schools, and participants is crucial to success (see Greenberg et al., 2003; Hahn et al., 2007; Payton et al., 2000; Reiss & Price, 1996). In addition, prevention programs are only successful when they are built as multi-year and multi-level; that is, prevention programming should stretch from early elementary school through high school and increasingly build skills for participants (see Greenberg et al., 2003; Hahn et al., 2007; Kenny, et al., 2002; Reiss & Price, 1996; Taub & Pearrow, 2007). In addition, multi-component prevention programs prove to be effective

for participants by both decreasing violent incidents and providing skills that reach beyond violence to apply to other risk behaviors (Biglan & Cody, 2003).

The Role of Developmental Assets

Developmental assets represent the relationships, opportunities and personal qualities that young people should acquire in order to avoid risks and thrive in a positive environment. The Search Institute (1990) has created a list of 40 protective factors that contribute to positive youth development in both internal and external arenas. These assets encompass a wide range of factors that impact positive development, including support from the community, family dynamics, school achievement, peer influences, and social skills that have been shown via evidence-based research to contribute to well-rounded and healthy development (Search Institute, 1990). The purpose of the framework is to look at all of these factors as a big picture instead of analyzing them as single ways to bolster positive development (Search Institute, 1990). In particular, these factors are rooted in three different areas of research, including prevention, resiliency, and positive youth development. The assets are tailored for different age ranges, including age 3-5, ages 5-9, ages 8-12, and ages 12-18 (for purposes of this study, assets from the 8-12 year old range are most applicable). Diagram 1 on the page 9 displays the relationships between these 40 assets.

Investigations of over 2.2 million youth across the United States show that the more developmental assets youth have, the more likely they are to thrive and the less likely they are to partake in high-risk behaviors (Search Institute, 1990). These assets are claimed to be generalizable to all youth despite gender, socioeconomic status, and family or ethnic/racial background (1990). According to the Search Institute (1990), the typical adolescent has less than half of the 40 assets. With respect just to violence, 6^{th} to 12^{th} graders with zero to ten assets are almost ten times more likely to engage in three or more acts of fighting, hitting, injuring a person, carrying/using a weapon, or threaten physical harm onto others than 6^{th} to 12^{th} graders with 31-40 assets (Search

Institute, 1990). This shows that there is a clear correlation between number of developmental assets and level of engagement in violent behaviors. In addition, only 40% of youth report having developmental assets that related to support and connection, like living in a caring neighborhood or community in which adults openly support youth (Clary & Rhodes, 2006; Slaby, 1997). These data suggest that a significant number of young people do not have appropriate resources to be successful as they transition into adulthood. Primary prevention programs operating in schools can potentially increase the number of developmental assets that students report.

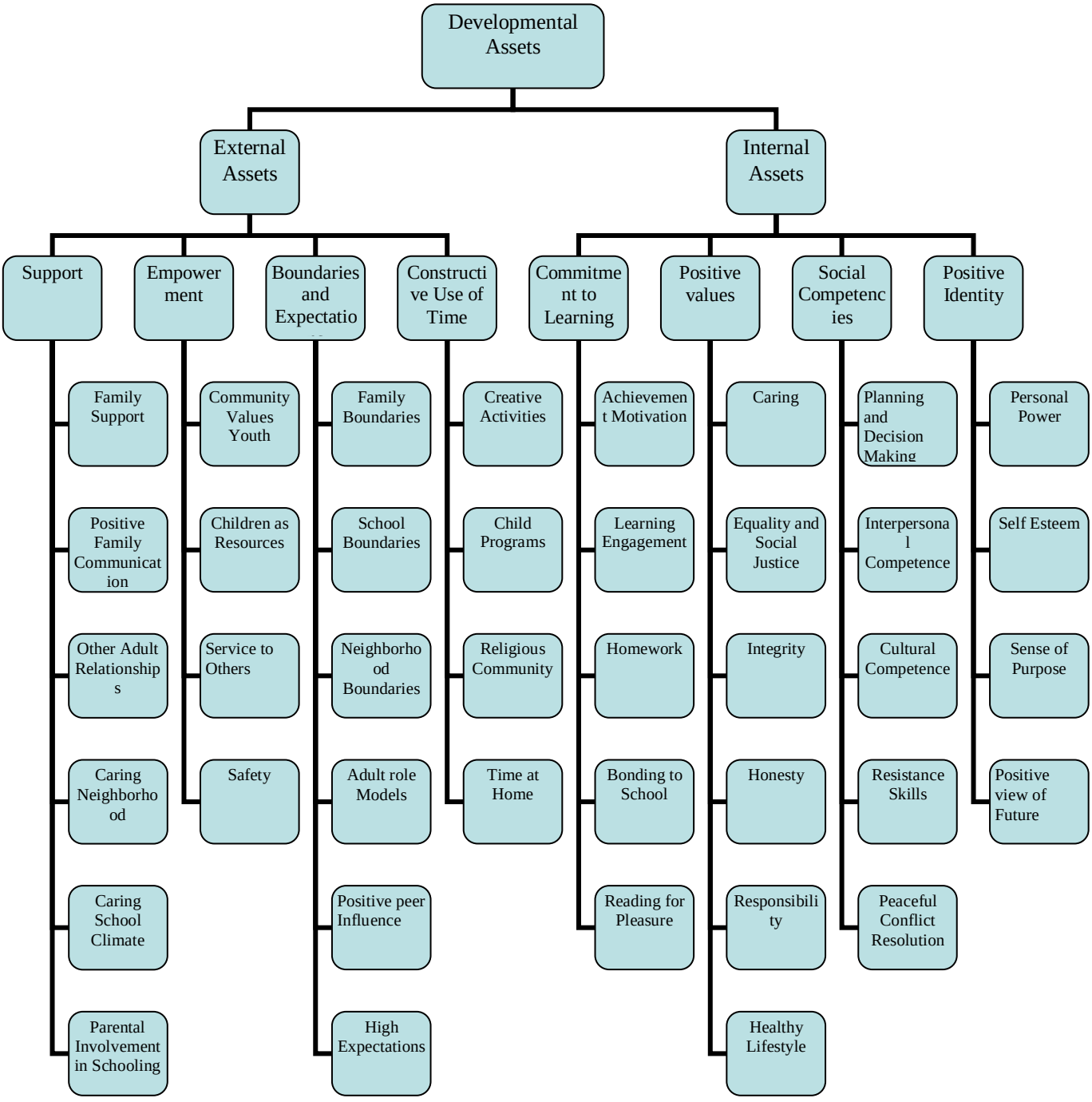
Using the Search Institute's list of developmental assets, youth development is framed in a positive light by emphasizing positive qualities associated with socially valued outcomes in the lives of young people (Clary & Rhodes, 2006). Important to note is that the assets are in part influenced by the adults with whom youth interact; this implies that youth development needs to be fostered and encouraged by adults in order to ensure success for the youth at risk. That is, non-parental and parental adults must take an interest in aiding in the attainment of these assets through active participation in resiliency programming. These assets encourage five different arenas of youth development: competence, confidence, connection to family/peers/community, character, and compassion for oneself and others (Clary & Rhodes, 2006).

This study aims to evaluate Violence is NOT the Answer (VINTA)[5], a school-based primary violence prevention program implemented in six different local public schools (two elementary, two middle, two high schools) located in the urban setting, which is guided by the Search Institute's developmental assets. This study analyzes the effects in the two middle schools. Though the program has been discontinued in these two schools because of a lack of both funding and strong support from the school district, it is still important to understand the potential affects that a program like VINTA can have on middle school aged youth. For example, this report assesses

[5] This is not the true name of this program. Though the Executive Director consented to this evaluation, the name has been kept classified for privacy reasons.

whether VINTA accomplishes its goals of providing effective prevention education, creating a positive peer group, increasing leadership development, implementing mentoring, and partaking in community service. The hope of this study is to show that the programs in the two studied middle school have some evidence-based merit.

Diagram 1: The framework of developmental assets for 8-12 year olds[6].



[6] As per the Search Institute's evidence-based findings (1990).

Literature Review

Understanding Youth Violence

In this study, the term "youth violence" includes any harmful behavior that affects the positive development of an adolescent; without interventions, these behaviors continue into adulthood. Youth violence refers to the offender, victim, and bystander(s) of a violent incident or crime. There are several factors that could contribute to the youth violence problem. For example, issues of child abuse or neglect, exposure to violence through direct observation or media, involvement with drugs or alcohol, experiencing discrimination based on race or socioeconomic status, and accessibility to firearms increase the likelihood of youth violence (McCord, 1997). McCord (1997) and Slaby (1997) claim that children who grow up in the inner city are at even higher risk to experience the preceding issues because the urban environments do not have the economic resources to provide the stable community structures that suburban communities have. Hahn et al (2007) articulate that poor parental supervision, poor discipline, and delinquent peer groups, in addition to lower socioeconomic status, can also lead to youth violence. According to Slaby (1997), for urban youth who are invested in their community, "peer acceptance and approval is accorded to aggressors, to bystanders who support violence, and even to victims who become victimized in the service of defending their right to be shown public respect" (p.180). It is important to note that these risk factors do not inevitably lead to youth violence, rather they are predictors; youth with these factors are more prone to be aggressors, victims or bystanders in a violent scenario compared to youth who do not have these experiences (Slaby, 1997).

Aggressors. Research suggests that youths' violent behaviors have four common patterns: (1) they translate across social contexts, (2) they become predictable over time, (3) they become increasingly arduous, and (4) they become gateways into other types of violent behaviors like assault, rape, threat of physical attack, or robbery (Slaby, 1997). Slaby (1997) notes that these

factors typically exist when interventions have not been put into place; research does indicate that with intervention, the predictability, severity and continuity of violent behaviors can decrease. Developmentally, it can be concluded that violent acts exhibited by a younger child can escalate as the child grows. In addition, children who watch aggressive television shows are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors in real life. African Americans are more likely to experience this effect because this particular ethnic group watches the most television (Slaby, 1997). This is important in the context of the sample in the current study, where the majority of the examined populations are African Americans. It makes sense then to implement intervention and prevention programs as early as possible to help the chances of ceasing the continuity of violence into later adolescence and adulthood (see Biglan & Cody, 2003).

Victims. Youth violence is also a serious issue for the victims it affects. Victim(s) are more likely to suffer immediate psychological and physical consequences of a violent attack than the aggressor(s) (Slaby, 1997). Victims of violence have tendencies to become aggressive as a means of retaliation, thus interventions for victims are equally as important to consider when designing anti-violence programming. In particular, research shows that being victimized is a precursor to becoming a violent offender (see Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994; Wilkinson, 2001), which further illustrates the importance of addressing and intervening in the lives of violence victims. Interventions for victims of violence should focus on aiding perceptions of the violent experience so that repetition of bullying, teasing and attacks cease to continue. For example, Quinn, Bell-Ellison, Loomis and Tucci (2007) suggest that when there is a positive spokesperson for anti-violence campaigns, perpetrators of violence tend to pay attention more; when the spokesperson describes how negative his/her experience with violence is (through the consequences s/he experienced), youth learn how important it is to change their own behaviors. Quinn et al's (2007) research suggests that changing violent offenders' perceptions of violence are possible; we just have to be

strategic and make campaigns that attract young people to pay attention. Moreover, since school-age youth have trouble controlling their social environments, they are more prone to experience repeated victimization (Slaby, 1997). Youth who identify with the victims in certain television programs are more likely to mistrust others; modeling by what they see portrayed in the media, many of these kids will choose to carry a gun (Slaby, 1997). Of course this is not the single reason youth choose to carry guns, as other risk factors (ie: social contexts) also contribute to youth violence (Wilkinson & Carr, 2008). In 2006 alone, 1.7 million students 12-18 years old were victims of nonfatal crimes at school (BJS & NCES, 2009).

Bystanders. Though often overlooked, the role of a bystander during a violent event can change the course of action. The bystander can provoke or instigate the violence, or the bystander can take actions to prevent the violence (Slaby, 1997). Passive bystander behavior can also change the courses of action for future violent events, as this type of behavior has shown to increase youths' violent/aggressive behaviors during a future encounter (most likely because passive behavior can be misinterpreted as approval for some youth). To a degree, this transforms the passive bystander into a passive aggressor because s/he is watching violence occur and choosing to not intervene. An overwhelming number of youth television viewers feel no emotional arousal when watching a violent event; this translates into real life by creating passive bystanders when an actual violent event is occurring. Slaby (1997) cites a study where youth who watched a violent program were less likely to call for help when two younger children were fighting compared to youth who watched a neutral program. Overall, violence affects multiple parties in a violent event: the victim(s), the aggressor(s) and the bystander(s) all contribute to the perpetration and possible continuation of youth violence.

Research suggests that people act on misperceptions frequently (Chapin & Coleman, 2003; Weinstein, 1980). According to Weinstein (1980), this can be best understood using the optimistic

bias, which is the perception that "bad things happen to other people, but not to me". This idea suggests that students in school do not necessarily recognize when violence is an issue, which provides responsible adults with the responsibility to reduce this optimistic bias. If this bias is minimized, teaching violence prevention will be easier because students will understand their personal risks, take peers' threats more seriously, and take self-protective measures when necessary (Chapin & Coleman, 2003). Research therefore suggests that it is necessary to address that violence is an issue in order to make students more aware of how to handle it.

With media playing such a large role in modern society, it is important to understand the effects that media mediums (like television, video games and movies) have on adolescents. Research suggests that exposure to violent media creates harmful effects for youth and even have lasting effects into adulthood (Anderson & Bushmann, 2001; Cantor, & Wilson, 2003; Delaney, 2003; Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003; Scharrer, 2006; Slaby 1997). In addition, American culture glorifies violence and presents it though unrealistic mediums (Slaby, 1997). Because of the role that media plays, researchers agree that school systems should be involved in addressing youth violence (Chapin & Coleman, 2003; David-Ferdon & Feldman, 2007; Huesmann et al., 2003; Scharrer, 2006; Worthen, 2007). To be successful, districts need the support of federal, state and/or local funding to support violence prevention and media literacy programming (Worthen, 2007). Because exposure for 2-14 year olds (school-aged children) is of greatest concern, using school-based programming might be the most effective way to reduce media-violence exposure (Chapin, & Coleman, 2003).

The Seriousness of Youth Violence Problem

Teaching violence prevention in the schools is becoming progressively more important for many districts nation-wide; teaching in elementary schools increased from 73.4% in 2000 to 83.6% in 2006, teaching in middle schools increased from 71.6% to 83.8%, and teaching in high schools

increased from 74.5% to 85.0% (SHPPS, 2006). According to the US Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009), among high school students, 18% carry a weapon, 5% carry a gun, 6% carry a weapon on school property and 8% had been threatened and injured with a weapon on school property. In addition, 36% were in a physical altercation, 4% were injured in physical fights that required medical assistance, and 12% were in a physical fight on school property. In a 2003 survey, more than 1.56 million school-age victims were attacked by violent offenders between the ages of 12 and 20; violent crimes were calculated to occur to every 4.2 out of 100 youth in that age bracket (Hahn et al., 2007). Youth between the ages of 10 and 17 (12% of the United States' population) constitute 25% of the offenders of serious violent victimizations (Hahn et al., 2007). These statistics reveal that there is a need to address adolescents' violent acts. Hahn et al (2007) agree that establishing prevention programs that target youth violence/aggression are important in order to decrease the chances of adolescents developing problem behaviors later in life. Taub and Pearrow (2007) suggest that the best way to handle these issues is to implement violence prevention programming in the schools.

How to Foster Positive Youth Development

Adults who interact with youth on a frequent basis play a large role in youths' development. The people who work with youth should be prepared and/or trained to handle challenges they may face. For example, adults should be prepared to interact with children with economic hardships and be aware of the neighborhoods the youth live in (Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic, & Smith, 2006; Scales, 2006; Woodland, 2008). Scales (2006) claims that youth are more naturally drawn to adults of similar ethnicity, which implies that youth might experience more positive development if they are mentored by ethnically-similar adults. Nevertheless, Scales (2006) believes that an adult and a youth who are racially or ethnically dissimilar can connect over a shared interest in music or video games; what is important is that adults try to connect with youth by finding common ground. The

next step to foster positive youth development would be to determine where this adult should come from: the community and/or the school.

Community organizations and programs must collaborate with one another in their programming to be effective in promoting positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2006). One of the best ways to encourage positive youth development is by providing opportunities in the community for meaningful involvement in anti-violence programming and ensuring that youth development programs use research-based interventions as a means to positively influence youth. Structures (like mentoring programs) in the community that promote relationships between youth and adults are shown to be quite effective. When youth feel connected to their community, their chances of having jobs, being financially independent, and being involved in meaningful relationships as adults are dramatically higher (Lerner et al., 2006). Meaningful and challenging opportunities are necessary to promote learning experiences for youth; youth need the chance to exhibit their skills and interact with the world around them in a way that is constructive and beneficial to the rest of society (Camino & Zeldin, 2006; Lerner et al., 2006). The more relevant these opportunities are to youths' lives, the more they will invest in the program.

Interventions are most effective when context specifics are taken into account. For instance, the community's diverse ranges of ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic demographics must be taken into consideration when implementing any type of prevention or intervention program. Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003), Wright and Cheng (1998) and Woodland (2008) argue that an advisory board for youth violence prevention programs should reflect the ethnic diversity of the community that it serves; in addition, the curriculum, design, and implementation should be tailored to the cultural demographics of the community. Oetting, Edwards, Kelly, and Beauvais (1997) agree that in addition to considering the ethnic identity of a community, the age, gender, and other population characteristics should also be considered. For programs existing in violent neighborhoods,

Woodland (2008) suggests that safety is a core component in attaining an effective program. If a program lends safety to its participants in an area that is violent, the community is much more likely to support the program's presence. This provokes further support to the idea that community involvement is crucial to the success of a program.

The former research suggests that programs must be aware of the population they are trying to recruit and tailor the program to that population's interests. In particular, community-based, after-school, recreational, service-learning and youth-led organizations provide multiple opportunities for youth to be engaged. The current researcher believes there is enough research to suggest that the preceding types of programs might have the potential to aid in youth attainment of the 40 developmental assets. They promote safety, supportive relationships, peer-contact, positive social norms, a place for skill and self-efficacy building and finally, a community of students (Camino & Zeldin, 2006; Murphy & Ensher, 2006). One way to implement these types of programs is to make a connection between community and school.

Another way to foster positive youth development is to avoid labeling children at school. Research shows that there are significant effects from being labeled as a "troublemaker", namely this label increases youths' risk factors (Ferguson, 2000). When children are labeled as something like a "troublemaker" or other words with negative connotations, other people in the child's microsystem think that the child will never amount to being more than that label. Consequently, if a teacher perceives a student as a "troublemaker", the teacher tends to use more harsh discipline towards that student. If that student does misbehave, the teacher might send the student to detention. Now there are two different counterproductive resources in this student's life because not only has the teacher ceased to assist the student, but the student has been denied access to school resources that promote achievement and prosocial development, such as positive peer interaction in a classroom, instructional time, and a general bonding to the school environment. If the child

continues to misbehave, those resources continue to diminish (Ferguson, 2000). This type of negative development can be avoided by increasing resilient factors instead of bolstering risk factors. It is clear that adults, particularly inside of the school system, can play a large role in promoting positive youth development.

Youth Violence Prevention Programs: What Works

Urban youth development is different than suburban or rural youth development. In particular, research suggests that there is a new "urban underclass" that has been emerging since the 1970s, which explains the reason for the declines in urban youths' outcomes. The likelihood that a child will finish school, have a steady job, and avoid other risk behaviors like substance abuse and violence all increase as a result of a youth belonging to this underclass (Lehman & Smeeding, 1997). In fact, the authors cite that during the mid-1990s, the issues of youth violence in urban areas was brought to attention multiple times at the highest levels of federal government; Satcher (2001) agrees that violence amongst youth in lower-income, urban areas is a serious public health issue. Growing up in impoverished urban areas is difficult for adolescents: they are socially isolated, racially segregated, and have difficulty finding economic opportunities. Lehman and Smeeding (1997) argue that crime rose as a result of the change in social context since the 1970s. One study found that urban youth violence has serious impacts on the entire community; according to community residents, violence exacerbates a sense of fear, anxiety and further social isolation among residents (Yonas, O'Campo, Burke, & Gielen, 2010). Local neighborhood residents in this particular study stated that youth violence in their cities was a high priority issue that the community locals tried to address, but failed to stop because of the lack of resources and manpower (Yonas et al., 2010). This implies that youth violence has the potential to be prevented because of the passion to stop it at the grassroots level, but more resources need to be made available. Lehman

and Smeeding (1997) note that with the right types of interventions in urban areas, the youth violence issue can be properly addressed.

Greenberg et al (2003) and Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) assert that a properly designed and implemented school-based prevention program can potentially have positive impacts on youths' social, health and academic areas. Despite the importance of community involvement, having the resources available might be problematic. Still, our education system is one of the most efficient means available to promote psychological, social and physical health for children (Fong & Hall, 2003; Taub & Pearrow, 2007). Children are in school for 30 plus hours a week, so schools have the potential to be an effective institution to create strong influences on children; potentially, schools can be the ideal site to affect the family and community (Taub & Pearrow, 2007). This implies that teaching resiliency to a child can positively affect the people that the child interacts with on a daily basis, like community members and parental figures. For these reasons, school-based programming holds promise. As children develop, the primary sources of influences shift from parents to school (Slaby, 1997), thus implying that the social contexts through which youth learn switches. Therefore, school can potentially be the more effective medium (compared to social learning just at home) to educate youth during later childhood and early adolescence. In order to use school programming as a means of promoting youth development, the right tools need to be used. Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) and Scheier, Botvin, Diaz, & Griffin (1999) suggest that prevention learning programs should be linked to academic achievement to attain the most successful outcomes, however to determine if an outcome is successful, evaluation research should be used.

Biglan and Cody (2003) argue that for a program to be considered effective, it must: be comprehensive, be developmentally appropriate, be continuous and longitudinal, be culturally sensitive, be school focused, use peers as models, involve parents in activities, be adapted to local conditions, include academic components, and complete an evaluation of the implementation of the

program. Research continuously shows that more schools than ever before are now using comprehensive programming that has a deeper level of systematic planning and implementation instead of using fragmented prevention programs (see Greenberg et al., 2003; Ikeda, Simon, & Swahn, 2001; Scheier et al., 1999; Severson, Andrews & Walker, 2003; Taub & Pearrow, 2007). This suggests that school systems that have prevention programming integrated throughout elementary, middle and high schools will have higher rates of success with their programs' outcomes than those who only have programming in elementary or high schools. Research also shows that prevention is most effective when started early—it is crucial to target kids at a young age in order to achieve the full potential of violence prevention programs (Durlak & Joseph, 1997). Active support from the community, students, staff and family is necessary to maintain high-quality programs and ongoing assessment of the effects on pupils' behaviors (see Camino & Zeldin, 2006; Greenberg et al., 2003; Hahn et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2006; Murphy & Ensher, 2006; Payton et al., 2000; Reiss & Price, 1996; Wright & Cheng, 1998). The best practices in prevention show that school-based programming that focuses on just the effects on the child is less effective than comprehensive programming that strives to intervene in the home, school and community (Camino & Zeldin, 2006; Kenny et al., 2002; Murphy & Ensher, 2006; Taub & Pearrow, 2007). VINTA attempts to improve internal and external factors in youths' lives, which could be why VINTA's survey instrument asks questions about home-life, school-life, and the after-school-life; it appears that VINTA tries to use comprehensive programming to achieve the highest possible positive outcomes. It's clear that collaboration between the school and community microsystems is the key to success.

Bridging the research to practice gap, thereby creating interdisciplinary collaborations, can be achieved through what Camino and Zeldin (2006) call "learning communities". These are defined as "spaces in which people can build networks, share information, question and challenge

one another, problem solve, and attempt to apply new knowledge" (p. 180). These types of communities could potentially change the courses of youth development because they have the power to adopt, sanction and execute new ideas and strategies to build attentiveness and aptitude for youth development (Camino & Zeldin, 2006). To form such communities, three tasks much be accomplished: (1) arrange the learning community by creating networks and collaborations among groups instead of creating new organizations, (2) guide participants toward a common goal and agenda that is both devoted to action and reflection, and (3) give constant attention to interpersonal relationships and community building (Camino & Zeldin, 2006). This broad concept can easily be translated into building a school learning community, in which there are adults who build the foundations for students to network with one another.

This idea seems like the ideal way to create a strong school community and appears to be how VINTA models its structure. VINTA takes place in the school, which is a way of establishing networks within a familiar group and not creating a new organization (task 1). VINTA guides its participants toward a common goal of bolstering violence-prevention strategies and fostering positive youth development (task 2). Finally, VINTA gives attention to interpersonal relationships and community building by its program requirements and constant interactions between the participants and directors (task 3). It appears that the VINTA program has made its own version of a learning community, which gives hope that the program has potential to be effective in its goal. This learning community in the school environment could then execute ideas of violence prevention and create curricula that build and carry out strategies of how to use peaceful conflict resolution.

The Surgeon General's Report (2001) indicates that other factors contribute to the success of a school-based program; for example, cost effectiveness is critical to consider in program funding (Satcher, 2001). Because there has yet to be any type of standardization established for the cost of effective violence prevention programs, it is difficult to obtain accurate data regarding effective cost

levels (Satcher, 2001). While the relationship between program funding and effectiveness still needs more research, research to date suggests that more funding yields more available resources for programming, which might potentially increase the impact of violence prevention programs (Satcher, 2001). Wright and Cheng (1998) suggest that partnerships that lead "to community capacity building, self-help, and empowerment may be the only way to sustain community-based prevention efforts beyond a project's particular period of funding or support" (p. 463).

Reiss and Price (1996) and Biglan and Cody (2003) indicate that for prevention programs to be effective, interventions must target developmental levels and include aspects of the individual and the environment. That is, programming should be aimed at the developmental assets necessary for positive youth development. Durlak and Joseph's (1997) research shows that the average participant in a primary prevention program is superior in performance compared to those in control groups (59%-82% better). In addition, participant outcomes of primary prevention programs reflect an 8%-46% difference in success rates between treatment and control groups, meaning that the treatment groups outperformed the control groups. Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin and Diaz (1995) argue that specifically for middle school intervention programs to be effective, academic and social competence should be addressed; this includes study habits, academic support, communication skills, peer connections, drug resistance skills, and increasing protective factors to build other resiliencies.

The common thread in effective prevention programs is that they encourage adults within schools as well as parents and community members to foster relationships with young people and engage them in formal and informal activities (Lerner et al., 2006; Murphy & Ensher, 2006; Scales, 2006). For example, informally, an adult can talk, advise and encourage young people; formally, an adult can mentor, coach, and provide youth with leadership. The key here is that there is a connection between the adult and the young person, no matter what the setting might be (Lerner et

al., 2006; Murphy & Ensher, 2006; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Scales, 2006; Woodland, 2008). Adults can be people in the neighborhood, religious community, extended family or from the school microsystem. Nationally, there are more than 2.5 million youth who are involved in school and community based mentoring programs each year (Clary & Rhodes, 2006). Despite this statistic, more adults than before have been neglecting to provide guidance and support. This is because of an increase in the professionalization in the fields of social services; adults are under the impression that social service sectors will provide the appropriate programming for youth, thus adults may not volunteer their time as frequently (Clary & Rhodes, 2006). Nonetheless, evaluations suggest that mentoring programs aid in the achievement of the developmental assets for positive youth development (Clary & Rhodes, 2006).

The Purposes of Evaluation-Based Research

The purpose of evaluation is to keep up with, sort out, absorb and use information in a meaningful way (Patton, 1997). Specifically, evaluating the outcome(s) of youth development interventions is necessary to determine the program's success (Babbie, 2007; Imm, Kehres, Wandersman, & Chinman, 2006; Woodland, 2008). Evaluations can examine how well the involved participants were reached, whether the outcomes were intended or a surprise, whether the cost of the program lines up with the benefits, and finally if a follow-up study is needed for more detailed analyses (Babbie, 2007; Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2002; Woodland, 2008). Comprehensive program evaluations assess the strengths and weaknesses of a program, thus they are crucial to program improvements. Evaluation allows other people to learn what is effective and what poses a challenge in fostering a successful program (Babbie, 2007; Imm et al., 2006; Thornton et al., 2002; Woodland, 2008).

Intentions of Evaluation. Babbie (2007) says that there are several different intentions of evaluation research: 1) to assess the existence and extent of problems, particularly among a segment

of the population (needs-assessment studies); 2) to determine whether the results of a program can be justified by its expenses (cost-benefit studies); or 3) to provide a information about something of interest, like obesity rates or the spread of a disease. Babbie (2007) also says that the majority of evaluation research is referred to as program evaluation, which is "the determination of whether a social intervention is producing the intended results" (p. 351).

Goals of Evaluation. Patton (1997) argues that in order to evaluate how well a program is doing, the program must have goals and a means to evaluate those goals; the evaluators must also have an intended use of the evaluation. Evaluation findings can serve three purposes: rendering judgments, provoking improvements, and/or creating new knowledge.

An evaluation is considered judgment-oriented if its purpose is to determine the overall merit, worth or value of a program. If questions like "did the program work?" or "should the program be continued?" arise, the evaluation is judgment-oriented. In order to enhance a precise and clear evaluation, the procedures and rationales to interpret the findings should be clearly stated.

If an evaluation is used to improve a program, it is considered improvement-oriented. If questions like "what are the program's strengths and weaknesses?" or "which types of participants are making progress and which are plateauing?" arise, the evaluation is improvement-oriented. Patton (1997) explains the difference between the former and the latter evaluations: "…anything done to the soup during preparation in the kitchen is improvement oriented; when the soup is served, judgment is rendered, including judgment rendered by the cook that the soup was ready for serving" (p. 69).

The previous two evaluation methods require analysis of the outcomes of the programs; there is a specific purpose to either determine a program's effectiveness or determine the program's potential to improve. In knowledge-oriented evaluations, no decision or action is expected, rather conceptual findings are utilized to influence thinking about the issues the evaluation raises. For

example, if the evaluation can be used to clarify a model, test a theory or distinguish differences between types of interventions, then the evaluation is knowledge-oriented.

According to Imm et al., (2006), evaluating youth programs can be particularly difficult for many reasons: finding a control group, collecting the appropriate outcome data, needing to work closely with a school, understanding when change in outcomes should be assessed, and then some. Because of these challenges, many organizations choose not to evaluate youth programs. This opens a window for researchers to conduct program evaluations and foster partnerships with organizations conducting interventions (Imm et al., 2006). Because the current study has several limitations (including sample size, discontinuation of the middle school programs which prohibited the qualitative observations of the program in action, and the lack of control group), these structures of evaluation will not be applicable. However, it is important to note that when completing comprehensive evaluations, the preceding models are useful.

Program Evaluations and Standards: Identifying Effective Interventions

While many schools implement potentially effective prevention programming, many of them are never evaluated, thus our knowledge about what programs do work is somewhat limited. The programs that were included for evaluation in the Surgeon General's Report were only those in which rigorous, scientific evaluations were conducted (Satcher, 2001). The Surgeon General provides limited only a limited number of evaluations on effective prevention programming; it is important to note that other sources provide opportunities for evaluations. For example, the Centers for Disease Control supported the evaluation of a program called the "Resolving Conflict Creatively Program" (see Aber, Jones, Brown, Chaudry & Samples, 1998). This used different criterion from the Surgeon General's Report, but it is still important to note that intervention evaluations are being completed by multiple sources. Nonetheless, not every program conducts a rigorous evaluation like

the ones listed in the Report or sponsored by other agencies, thus the full list of effective programs remains unknown.

The Report summarized over 10 school-based violence prevention programs as model (highly effective) and promising (moderately effective) programs, however it intentionally left out any programs that contained "small risk factors" like academic failure or depressive disorders, and programs that service children on psychotropic drugs, most likely because these are too goal-specific (Satcher, 2001). In order to be considered a model program, certain criteria must be met: (a) rigorous experimental design, experimental or quasi-experimental; (b) significant deterrent effects on violence or serious delinquency (Level 1) or any risk factor for violence with a large effect of .30 or greater (Level 2); (c) replication with demonstrated effects; (d) sustainability of effects. Examples of model programs are: Functional Family Therapy, Multisystemic Therapy, and the Seattle Social Development Project. In order to be considered a promising program, certain criteria must be met: (a) rigorous experimental design, experimental or quasi-experimental; (b) significant deterrent effects on violence or serious delinquency (Level 1) or any risk factor for violence with an effect size of .10 or greater (Level 2); (c) either replication or sustainability of effects. Examples of promising programs include: Families and Schools Together (FAST Track), the Montreal Longitudinal Study/Preventive Treatment Program, the School Transitional Environmental Program (STEP), Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), and Linking the Interests of Families and Teachers (LIFT).

The Get Real About Violence Curriculum (GRAVC) is a program that is the closest model to VINTA, thus understanding how GRAVC operates could provide meaningful knowledge about how successful intervention programs operate; it is important to note however that VINTA did not specifically use this as a framework. The demographics of the participants were almost the same between the control and experimental school. The experimental group was 55% male, 45% female,

77.2% African American, 7.2% White, 4.2% Asian, 1.8% Hispanic, and 9.6% identified as "other". The control group was 50% male, 50% female, 80.2% African American, 8.3% White, 4.1% Asian, and 7.5% identified as "other". This is a twelve lesson curriculum that is centered around four problem behaviors: fighting, watching a fight, gossiping about a fight and verbal aggression (Meyer, Roberto, Boster, & Roberto, 2004). GRAVC uses multiple mediums throughout the curriculum, including video cassettes, audio cassettes, worksheets, posters, role play, panel discussions and class discussion; these mediums are supposed to comprehensively communicate how to avoid violence to the students. Process evaluation occurs during the program's implementation through both instructor self-reports and direct qualitative classroom observation; this ensures that the program is being implemented correctly (Meyer et al., 2004). GRAVC utilizes evaluations to determine the progress of the program; these evaluations focused on the curriculum's implementation through both classroom observations and instructor self-reports. The evaluation used statistical analysis to compare the survey answers at a time one and a time two.

Process evaluations revealed that the instructors really enjoyed the curriculum; they followed the curriculum with ease and had intentions to use it again for the following academic year. The outcome evaluations reveal a few clear patterns. First, the students in the experimental and control groups both digressed more than they improved; this is not necessarily cause for concern however because the participants in each group were in seventh grade which is a time for increased verbal aggression (Meyer et al., 2004). However, data analyses show that the experimental group had 9 more positive changes than the control group and 1/3 fewer negative changes; the rate of digression was slower in the experimental group than the control group, which suggests that though the program did not increase behavioral outcomes, it did slow down the negative effects. Namely, students who participated in the program outperformed non-GRAVC participants in 3 of the 4 behaviors: verbal aggression, watching a fight and gossiping about fight

(Meyer et al., 2004). Specifically, participants indicated on their evaluations that they had been less verbally aggressive towards peers within the past 30 days. These outcomes suggest that an improvement on behavior as well as behavioral intentions was made for GRAVC participants. Finally, GRAVC was overall more effective in targeting behavioral intentions (a person's intention to perform or not perform a behavior), than on actual behaviors (Meyer et al., 2004). These findings could suggest that this violence prevention program, though not particularly effective on correcting current behavioral issues, might prove to be helpful in preventing future negative behaviors (which provides more support that primary violence prevention is effective). The authors conclude their study by suggesting: (1) that future studies be conducted on violence prevention programs and (2) that future studies investigate more schools, schools with a diverse student body (ie: not majority African American), and participants in different grade levels (Meyer et al., 2004). The current study is similar to the GRAVC evaluation, but adds to the knowledge base because the school settings are diverse. Though the current study does not aim to provide a systematic evaluation of a violence prevention program, it does aim to provide suggestions for improvement after assessing its effectiveness.

Methodology

Study Design

This research examines the effects of the VINTA program on youth outcomes. The study has two major components: an impact assessment and a process analysis of the VINTA program's signature event. The researcher conducted secondary data analysis using recent data that had already been collected by VINTA. The data consists of information from pre and post tests that students completed as part of their participation in this program that was funded through a Midwestern public school system. The research design for the impact evaluation portion of this

study consists of a one-group Pretest and Posttest Design (Chambliss & Schutt, 2003). In addition, the researcher analyzed process oriented data that captured how the VINTA program was implemented. Information on the program engagement was used to estimate what effects it may have on participants.

The current report is classified as case study; that is, research involved collecting data of a single group or population (in this case, the population includes selected sample in the VINTA program in both Miami[7] and Alexander[8] Middle Schools) using the previously mentioned data. VINTA participants have the opportunity to perform in the end of the year awards ceremony; the researcher attended this ceremony in April 2009. This qualitative data could provide important complementary data on facets of this project.[9] This award ceremony could have served as supplemental material from limited participation observation that the researcher completed. The goal of the current evaluation is to see how well VINTA functions in increasing the targeted developmental assets, which measures how effective the five protective factor building strategies (prevention education, positive peer group, leadership development, mentoring, and community service) were.

The research posed two main hypotheses related to program impact. They were as follows: *Hypothesis 1:* students engaged in the Violence is NOT the Answer school-based primary violence prevention program will gain developmental assets from the beginning of the program to the end of the program, and *Hypothesis 2:* the greater the engagement in VINTA activities the greater the gains in developmental assets over time.

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[7] This is not the true name of this school. For confidentiality reasons, this name has been given this as a pseudonym

[8] This is not the true name of this school. For confidentiality reasons, this name has been given this as a pseudonym

[9] During analysis, this facet of the data did not strengthen or weaken the participants' developmental asset gain. The participation at both schools was very low for this event. At Miami, 25% of the sample and 19.3% of the total recorded cases participated in the event; at Alexander, 20% of the sample and 23.9% of the total recorded cases participated in the event. Instead of including this information within the context of the pre and post test analyses, this has been moved to Appendix B.

Research Setting

Miami Middle School. This study will focus on the VINTA programs that were being implemented with students from Alexander and Miami Middle Schools, two public schools that serve grades 6-8, located in urban areas of a Midwestern city. According to the state's evaluation of Miami, the school was considered to be on "academic emergency" during the 2008-2009 school year. Miami only met the attendance indicator out of the necessary ten, failed to meet its Adequate Yearly Progress (required by No Child Left Behind 2001), and failed to make any substantial improvement over the past three school years (they fell below the Value-Added Measure). A 100 on the Performance Index Score is necessary to be required "proficient"; Miami's Performance Index Score was 62.1. One hundred percent of the teachers at this school have a Bachelor's Degree and 53.6% of them have a Masters. The student demographics for Miami are striking: 78.8% of the school is Black, non-Hispanic; 15.4% is White, non-Hispanic; 3.6% is Hispanic; less than 10 students are Multiracial; and 99% of the students are considered to be economically disadvantaged.

Alexander Middle School. According to the 2008-2009 Report Card for this school, Alexander is currently on "academic emergency" and has only met one out of the ten state indicators—though none of the achievement tests scores are close to being considered proficient, the school demonstrates high attendance rates. Alexander's Performance Index Score at the time of data collection (2008-2009) was at 54.1. In addition, this school failed to meet the mandated Adequate Yearly Progress and scored below the Valued-Added Measure. One hundred percent of teachers in this school have a Bachelor's Degree and 52.4% of those teachers have at least a Masters Degree. The student demographics at this school are similar to those of Miami: 83.2% are Black, non-Hispanic; 10.6% are White, non-Hispanic; fewer than 10 Multi-Racial; fewer than 10 Mexican students; and 97.7% are considered to be economically disadvantaged (the Multi-Racial and Mexican student percentages were too low to report, so numeric values were reported instead).

Violence is NOT the Answer Program Model. VINTA was established in a Midwestern public school system as a means to address the various needs of youth who live in the high violence areas. The program's website states that the goal of the program "is to develop the protective factors in children that assist them in lessening the risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence". VINTA is designed around the 40 developmental assets developed by the Search Institute with hopes of creating resilient adolescents, regardless of the risk factors present in their lives; these factors might include: anti-social behaviors, low academic aspirations, exposure to high levels of media violence, peer rejection, family disorganization, aggression, low impulse control, and poor academic performance. According to the Executive Director, the developmental asset framework was selected for many different reasons: 1) the framework is easy to understand and explain, especially for teachers, parents, and staff; 2) most educators and funders are familiar with the Search Institute's reputability, so using the assets has some research clout; 3) the developmental assets do not bring much controversy to the research or practitioner world; 4) it is the most comprehensive list of protective factors because it takes the internal and external factors into consideration and applies to any child, despite demographic background; 5) the Search Institute has evaluation measures for groups based on the developmental assets, which is valuable to VINTA; and 6) the research is "about reducing risk taking behavior during adolescence, specifically violence, illegal drugs, early sex and tobacco use. No other research that [the Executive Director knows] of says that violent behavior can be reduced if these specific (40) factors are increased" (VINTA Executive Director, personal communication, February 7, 2010). Personal communication with the Executive Director also suggested that much research and thought went into picking this framework because it best suited the mission of VINTA and encompasses multiple perspectives. To affect these risk factors, VINTA developed five protective factor building strategies which became the goals of their program: prevention education, positive peer group, leadership development,

mentoring, and community service. There are a few ways that students can become participants in the VINTA program: (1) self-selection, (2) recommendation by school staff based on the risk factors that could be present in students' lives, or (3) recommendation by school staff based on the lack of protective factors the students display.

In an effort to provide evidence-based resources, the researcher worked in partnership with the Executive Director of VINTA to use the program's existing data in order to provide the director and coordinators with an external, systematic evaluation of their program. Although VINTA conducts internal evaluations of all their programs, many funders expect or prefer that the evaluation be conducted by an outside agency or researcher. An external evaluation may improve VINTA's ability to attract needed support for the Violence is NOT the Answer program. The intention of the current evaluation project is to provide an independent, impartial assessment of student outcomes and provide suggestions to the VINTA team that may improve future evaluations conducted by the VINTA staff.

It is important to understand the context in which VINTA's middle school programs were implemented. First, the middle school programs were funded to be half-time programs; VINTA has always had "full time *and* part time programs at the high schools and elementary schools" (Executive Director, personal communication, February 11, 2010). The funding for the middle school programs came from a $58,000 grant contract that was awarded to the public school district to implement a violence prevention program. This money was allocated to VINTA because they were an already established program; this was the first time that the school district gave any funding to VINTA. VINTA was eager to take advantage of this opportunity because it gave 1) a potential way to bridge the gap between the elementary and high school programs, and 2) a chance to create the multi-year, comprehensive model that literature suggests makes the most effective prevention programs. The grant was awarded for usage from January 2008 through June 2009; this meant that

the Executive Director had a quick turn-around time to hire staff, modify the curriculum for a different aged audience, and attract enough participants. Though VINTA was eager to create middle school programs, the administration at Miami did not welcome it with open arms. The Executive Director believes that the principal's attitude about VINTA was the main reason why the program had so many implementation problems (Executive Director, personal communication, February 11, 2010). Specifically, VINTA went through three coordinators in 18 months at this school; this instability might factor into the developmental asset loss and/or unexpected asset gain for Miami participants. After discussions with the school system, personnel have come to understand that program cannot be forced upon a school: school administrative capacity, staff capacity and school space must be taken into consideration before a program is implemented. The Executive Director believes that since VINTA is a daily program and has a variety of needs that most school programs do not, the principal's full support is essential (Executive Director, personal communication, February 11, 2010). The program in Alexander did not face the preceding challenges.

The objectives of the VINTA program are twofold. First, the program strives to increase protective factors or decrease risk factors for participating students through an in-school program that runs from October to June. Targeting risk and protective factors is one effective way to teach prevention strategies (Biglan & Cody, 2003; Severson, Andrews & Walker, 2003). Although students' engagement in the program throughout the school year are considered to be an indicator of program success, measurable gains in the desired development assets are the program's central goals. The mission of VINTA is to "empower youth through results oriented programming and services to prevent violence and promote healthy lives" (Executive Director, 2006, p. 6).

Data Available for this Study

VINTA completes an assessment of their programs using self-report surveys of youth who are recruited into the program. The surveys are administered by the program coordinator at each

school. Youth who participate in VINTA complete a brief survey at the beginning of the program. This survey focuses on assessing the number and nature of students' experiences with regard to the developmental assets. Near the end of the school year, a post-program survey is conducted in order to measure any changes in risk and protective factors since the pre-test was conducted. Each response is assigned to a certain number of points (1-4); answers that would indicate having an asset are worth more in value. For example, one question says "I have __ trusted adults that I can tell my problems and get help, who are not my parents". The possible answers are 0, 1, 2, and 3 or more. If a student selects "0", it was recorded as a "1" in the spreadsheet; if a student selects "3 or more", it was recorded at a "4". The program staff used Microsoft Excel to organize and analyze the program data. The Executive Director provided the middle school program database to the researcher to conduct a more thorough and appropriate statistical analysis of the data. Table 1 shows the number of usable survey participants at each point in time for both schools. The reader should note that not every middle schooler who completed a pre-test later completed a post-test survey and some youth only completed the post-test survey, indicating that those youth likely joined the program later in the school year.

Table 1: Comparing the number of pre and post test surveys per school.

	Pre-test (n)	Post-test (n)
School setting: Alexander	29(20)	25(20)
School setting: Miami	36(20)	26(20)

The (n) values show the number of participants who had both a pre and post test survey.

The program database (series of Excel spreadsheets) also included demographic information and detailed activities by attendance records of participation in VINTA. The database breaks each activity down by what it is (e.g., a meeting, a prevention education lesson, community service); each activity has a general name and a code assigned to it to indicate the type of objective strategy it

targets. In terms of keeping track of attendance, sheets are signed by the students at each event; the coordinators saw to it "as best they could that each person in attendance signed the sheet" (VINTA Executive Director, personal communication, February 7, 2010). This means that the attendance policy was a combination of coordinators double checking the correct attendance and the students being responsible for checking in. Grant records require that the original attendance sheets (with student signatures) are kept on file in the office (VINTA Executive Director, personal communication, February 7, 2010). Each time an activity is offered, the director records in the database which students were present; activities are worth a certain number of "points" and the students are supposed to reach a target number of points in order to earn incentives (e.g., ice cream socials). Every quarter (9-10 weeks), the director calculates the total number of "points" per student. At the end of the year, everything is summed; this determines if a program requirement was met.

Measures

Violence is NOT the Answer's Measures. The pre and post survey questions were developed to measure particular attitudes and behaviors that are linked to healthy development. In addition, the researcher examined several key demographic variables such as age, gender, and race/ethnicity; these factors did not yield significant results in the analysis, however there may not have been enough statistical power for subgroup analyses to pick up major differences due to the small sample. VINTA attempted to measure 13 of the 40 assets at the middle school aged level. Because two of these assets were only framed to be answered as post-test questions and one asset is not addressed on the survey instrument, only 10 assets are measured in the analysis. VINTA also asked youth 10 additional questions that appeared only on the post-test. The researcher did not use these for the impact analysis because there were no pre-test data for comparison. The 10 measured assets are primarily internal and address social competencies; however there are a few other arenas that are tested (see Search Institute, 1990):

- Asset 3: Other adult relationships-Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s).
- Asset 22: Learning Engagement-Child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning at school and enjoys participating in learning activities outside of school.
- Asset 24: Bonding to School-Child cares about teachers and other adults in school.
- Asset 33: Interpersonal Competence-Child cares about and is affected by other people's feelings, enjoys making friends, and when frustrated or angry, tries to calm herself/himself down.
- Asset 34: Cultural Competence-Child knows and is comfortable with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and with her or his own cultural identity.
- Asset 35: Resistance Skills-Child can stay away from people who are likely to get her or him in trouble and is able to say no to doing wrong or dangerous things.
- Asset 36: Peaceful Conflict Resolution-Child seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
- Asset 37: Personal Power-Child feels he or she has some influence over things that happen in her or his life.
- Asset 38: Self Esteem-Child feels he or she is proud to be the person that he or she is.
- Asset 40: Positive view of personal future-Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.

As described above, the survey items response categories included four choices (Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always or 0, 1, 2, 3 or more times). For data analysis purposes, the categories were assigned a numeric value (one through four or zero through three) at the pre- test and post test survey.

In addition to the survey, data was collected regarding student participation in VINTA throughout the year. Specifically, there were three attendance requirements: 1) Participation in at least 40 hours of Violence is NOT the Answer programming at Miami Middle School and at least 30 hours at Alexander Middle School; 2) a minimum of 25 total Prevention Education Lessons (some sessions were review of previously learned lessons) at Miami and a minimum of 10 Prevention Education Lessons at Alexander Middle School (10 total different lessons)[10], and; 3) a minimum of three community service or leadership development activities. Prevention education was implemented using the "Too Good for Violence Curriculum" which promotes healthy beliefs for middle school students. According to the Clearinghouse, a US Department of Education program, this curriculum has potentially positive effects on behavior, knowledge, attitudes and values (2006). This means that achieving a similar success in VINTA could be possible. Another strategy used involved promoting positive peer group development, which was measured by attendance at meetings, monthly recognition awards, and having special incentives like pizza parties or ice cream socials. The third strategy was leadership development, measured by peace week, a leadership day camp, and other all-school programs. Mentoring and community service were the last two strategies, which were provided by the program coordinators. Of course, the target population included every participant in VINTA. These records were kept by the coordinators at each school and were provided to the researcher. These are the only data that the researcher had to analyze. Attendance in program activities was factored by using the three requirements outlined by the Executive Director of VINTA. These were coded as Requirement1, Requirement2, Requirement3 and TotalMet. The two open ended questions from the post test were coded by the researcher; the answers to question 39 fell into nine categories while the answers for question 40

[10] The prevention education lessons followed the Too Good for Violence curriculum. At Miami, the hours account for the director both teaching and reviewing the lessons.

were coded into eight categories. The researcher coded all responses offered by participants on these questions (up to three coded categories were accepted per answer).

Selecting a sample. There are 57 records of students who at any point had contact with the VINTA program at Miami Middle School and 46 records of students who had contact with the Alexander Program; these respective numbers include students who only completed a pre test, only completed a post-test, completed both a pre and post test, and did not complete either test. The researcher worked carefully to import the data from Excel into SPSS 17.0, a statistical software that would allow her to conduct the necessary statistical analysis to test the research hypotheses. The first major task was identifying a sample that had the necessary data on the developmental assets measured at both points in time. Using SPSS 17.0, the researcher created a filter to specify the evaluated sample to just those students who completed a pre and post test survey; though the researcher was hoping for a sufficiently large sample at both schools, the end result was n=20 (thus suggesting that attrition from the program was an issue). As shown in Table 2, the samples were primarily compromised of ethnic minorities at both schools. The gender balances were not equal, however because of the small sample, this did not prove to have a detectable influence on outcomes.

Table 2: Demographics of the Studied Middle Schools

	Miami Middle School Sample	Miami Middle School's Student Body	Alexander Middle School Sample	Alexander Middle School's Study Body
Females	65%	Not Reported	35%	Not Reported
Males	35%	Not Reported	65%	Not Reported
African American	45%	78.8%	70%	83.2%
Caucasian	20%	15.4%	10%	10.6%
Mexican/Hispanic	5%	3.6%	-	Less than 10 students-
Multi-Racial	15%	Less than 10 students	5%	Less than 10 students
Did not specify an ethnicity	15%	Not Reported	15%	Not Reported

These data suggest that the studied sample does not necessarily represent a correct proportion of size or demographics of the school's population, and therefore we should use caution when generalizing any results to the entire school; regardless of the demographic ratios, the small sample would warn us to use caution to make *any* of these results generalizable to the school's population.

Human Subjects Concerns. Because this study involves human subjects, IRB approval was obtained. The researcher applied and submitted an IRB exemption application under exemption category 1 and received approval on September 22, 2009. Under this exemption, each student's name and personal identifying information was carefully coded by the researcher: 1) every student's name was replaced with a unique four digit code and 2) birthdays, street addresses, and parental contact information were deleted. The data were provided by the Executive Director of VINTA, who provided a letter of support for this study.

Data Reduction and Scaling. The researcher filtered the results to only use those records with pre and post test data for analysis (as previously mentioned). Because some assets had one measure and other assets had seven measures, multi-item scaling was completed. Combined measures are superior to single item measures, so factor analyses were completed to test if multiple measures could be combined into a multi-item scale. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the number of measures per asset; this should paint the picture as to why factor analysis was necessary[11]. The results from the multi-item analysis are found in Tables 4 and 5. The researcher used the results of these data reduction strategies to develop multi-item scales when appropriate. The factor loads and subsequently reliability analyses had to be consistent at both points in time to justify creating a scale for the measure. It was appropriate to create five scales for the Miami Middle School data and four scales for the Alexander Middle School program.

[11] Question 20 was not used for analysis due to the poor wording of the question

Table 3: Breakdown of measures per asset

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5	Measure 6	Measure 7	Measure 8
Asset 3: Support from non-parental adults	Question 1							
Asset 22: Learning engagement	Question 2							
Asset 24: Cares about school	Question 4							
Asset 33: Interpersonal competence	Question 22	Question 23	Question 24	Question 25	Question 26	Question 27	Question 28	Question 29
Asset 34: Cultural competence	Question 5							
Asset 35: Resistance skills	Question 15	Question 16	Question 17	Question 18				
Asset 36: Peaceful conflict resolution	Question 13	Question 14	Question 19					
Asset 37: Personal power	Question 3	Question 6	Question 7	Question 8	Question 9			
Asset 38: Self esteem	Question 21							
Asset 40: Positive view of personal future	Question 10	Question 11	Question 12					

Table 4: Results of the factor and reliability analyses for Miami Middle School

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Factor Analysis Eigenvalue	Reliability Cronbach's Alpha	Factor Analysis Eigenvalue	Reliability Cronbach's Alpha
Asset 33 Interpersonal competence (questions 22-23)	1.459	0.628*	1.390	0.560
Asset 33 Interpersonal competence (questions 26-29)	2.249	0.878*	2.936	0.683*
Asset 35 Resistance skills (questions 15-18)	2.664	0.830*	2.331	0.755*
Asset 36 Peaceful conflict resolution (questions 13, 14, 19)	1.864	0.691*	1.681	0.605*
Asset 37 Personal power (questions 3,7, 8)	1.739	0.630*	1.737	0.633*
Asset 37 Personal power (questions 6,9)	1.304	0.463	1.139	dnc
Asset 40 Positive view of personal future (questions 10-11)	1.421	0.589	1.583	dnc

*indicates that $\alpha>0.6$, which is considered reliable over time.
Note: "dnc" means "did not compute" and indicates that the first reliability analysis for the pre-test measure did not yield results to indicate that a scaling would make sense, thus the post test measure was not tested for reliability

After running the reliability tests, some of the variables were combined to create new multi-item scales for analysis while others could only be used as individual items in the analysis. The following scales were created for the Miami data: Asset33scale1, Asset35scale1, Asset36scale1, and Asset37scale1. Note that the questions being scaled in Alexander (shown below in Table 5) are different than those of Miami. This is because during analysis, the researcher tried all possible combinations of the questions during the factor analysis, but only the ones that extracted a component that was at least one are reported. Because of this, the questions that make up each multi-item scale are different for each school. For the Alexander Middle School, factor analysis and

reliability analysis results suggested that it would be appropriate to create four scales: Asset33scale2, Asset33scale3, Asset35scale2, and Asset40scale1.

Table 5: Results of the factor and reliability analyses for Alexander Middle School

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Factor Analysis Eigenvalue	Reliability Cronbach's Alpha	Factor Analysis Eigenvalue	Reliability Cronbach's Alpha
Asset 33 Interpersonal competence (questions 22-23)	1.580	0.744*	1.639	0.767*
Asset 33 Interpersonal competence (questions 24-25)	1.530	0.689	1.090	0.198
Asset 33 Interpersonal competence (questions 26-29)	2.532	0.805*	3.182	0.913*
Asset 35 Resistance skills (questions 15-18)	2.667	0.819*	2.544	0.762*
Asset 36 Peaceful conflict resolution (questions 13, 14, 19)	1.547	0.522	2.123	dnc
Asset 37 Personal power (questions 3,7, 8)	1.281	0.416	1.520	dnc
Asset 37 Personal power (questions 6,9)	1.375	0.543	1.339	dnc
Asset 40 Positive view of personal future (questions 10-11)	2.097	0.771*	1.978	0.739*

*indicates that $\alpha > 0.6$, which is considered reliable over time.
Note: "DNC" means "did not compute" (see Table 4)

Data Analysis and Analytic Strategies

Comparisons were first based upon descriptive statistics, or statistics that describe the distribution of and relationship among variables (Chambliss & Schutt, 2003). These included

finding the means, medians, standard deviations and ranges. In addition, the researcher ran paired t-tests to find the change between the pre and post test scores. Paired t-tests helped distinguish if the change from the pre to post test was significant; it measures the degree to which the difference from time one to time two was significant by reporting the T-statistic, the degrees of freedom, and the p value (which is the significance level). Because the sample size was so small, significance was flagged at $p<0.1$ (90% confidence interval).

The researcher was particularly interested in how attendance factored into a participant's developmental asset gain (or lack thereof). To find the impact of meeting any of the requirements, two way ANOVAs were used. For each measure of the asset, requirements 1, 2 and 3 were analyzed; then, the impact of having any requirement met (TotalMet) was factored in. Correlations were also used to find the relationship between meeting a requirement of the program and their overall attendance; participation and/or attendance to the VINTA Premiere Awards Ceremony was considered during this analysis.

Initially, the researcher wanted to make comparisons between how different ethnic groups, genders or ages measured against each other, but due to the small sample size, this was not particularly applicable.

Potential Implications of the Current Study

Youth violence continues to be a major concern in today's world, particularly in urban districts. With youth violence having such high costs to society, it is crucial that the community and school intervene; research shows that the more networks a student has between the community and school, the higher her/his chance of reducing risky/violent behavior (see Greenberg et al., 2003; Hahn et al., 2007; Kenny et al., 2002; Payton et al., 2000; Reiss & Price, 1996; Taub & Pearrow, 2007). Research also shows that well designed and well implemented primary prevention programs

have been proven to be effective in increasing developmental assets for youth (Flay, 2003; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), which leaves potential for decreasing youth violence (Lehman & Smeeding, 1997; Yonas et al., 2010). VINTA is currently facing funding issues; past studies show that though not a major contributing factor, cost plays a role in the effectiveness of a program. The intention with this study is twofold: 1) to shed light on the potential benefits of having programming like VINTA in the schools, 2) to propose ways in which program such as VINTA might improve further evaluations of their efforts (see conclusions and discussions).

Results

Descriptive univariate results: setting the context of the data

Before we can understand the data analysis, it is important to know the beginning and ending points. The tables below report the descriptive statistics for the pre and post test measures of each school. The scaling for everything, aside from support from non-parental adults and questions 26-29, is on a 1-4 scale: 1=rarely or not at all, 2=sometimes, 3=often, and 4=almost always. For support from non-parental adults and questions 26-29, the scale is from 0-3 due to the nature of the questions asking for a numeric response (ie: In the past week, I said mean things about somebody ____times). It made the most sense to use the corresponding numbers as the value labels for these cases (ie, “3 or more” was coded as “3” during the researcher’s analysis). The means and medians are reported for each measure because the sample size is so small; when there are only 20 cases, the mean may not be the best indicator of the average response because it can be so easily skewed by a higher or lower value. The standard deviations were found by calculating the distance between the most extreme values and the mean for that measure. The minimum and maximum refer to the lowest reported coded answer and the highest reported coded answer for each measure. To give a full idea of the data, every measure is listed; when scales were used, those are also listed.

Table 6: Pre Test Measures for Miami Middle School

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Support from non-parental adults	2.20	3	1.196	0	3
Learning engagement	3.25	3.5	0.851	2	4
Cares about school	3.42	3	0.607	2	4
Interpersonal competence (question 22)	3.00	3	1.054	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 23)	3.00	3	0.943	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 24)	3.05	3	1.079	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 25*)	3.05	3	0.848	2	4
Interpersonal competence (question 26*)	0.63	0	0.895	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 27*)	0.37	0	0.831	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 28*)	0.63	0	1.165	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 29*)	0.42	0	0.838	0	3
Interpersonal competence (scale 1)	1.74	1	2.169	0	7
Comfortable with different cultures	3.10	3	0.968	1	4
Resistance skills (question 15*)	3.70	4	0.733	1	4
Resistance skills (question 16*)	3.15	3	0.875	1	4
Resistance skills (question 17*)	3.35	4	0.988	1	4
Resistance skills (question 18*)	3.25	1	0.967	1	4
Resistance skills (scale 1)	11.01	12	2.286	6	13
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 13*)	3.30	3.5	0.865	1	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 14*)	2.53	3	1.073	1	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 19*)	3.20	3.5	0.951	1	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (scale 1)	6.88	7.33	1.909	2	9
Personal power (question 3*)	3.55	4	0.605	2	4
Personal power (question 6)	3.40	3.5	0.681	2	4
Personal power (question 7*)	3.20	3	0.834	1	4
Personal power (question 8*)	2.89	3	0.875	1	4
Personal power (question 9)	3.75	4	0.550	1	4
Personal power (scale 1)	7.65	7.67	1.331	4	9
Self esteem	3.63	4	0.895	1	4
Positive view of personal future (question 10)	3.65	4	0.489	3	4
Positive view of personal future (question 11)	3.65	4	0.671	2	4
Positive view of personal future (question 12)	2.70	3	0.801	1	4

* Indicates that measures were components of a scale for their respective assets.

Note that when looking at a scaled item, it makes sense that these measures are higher; in scaled items, multiple measures are added together, so the baselines are fundamentally different than single item measures.

Table 7: Post test measures for Miami Middle School

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Support from non-parental adults	1.95	2	0.999	0	3
Learning engagement	2.85	3	0.933	1	4
Cares about school	2.70	2.5	0.801	2	4
Interpersonal competence (question 22)	2.65	3	0.745	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 23)	2.45	2	0.887	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 24)	2.80	3	1.152	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 25*)	2.55	3	1.146	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 26*)	1.50	2	1.277	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 27*)	0.90	1	0.967	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 28*)	1.40	1	1.188	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 29*)	1.00	0.5	1.170	0	3
Interpersonal competence (scale 1)	4.05	5.25	3.214	0	9
Comfortable with different cultures	3.25	4	1.070	1	4
Resistance skills (question 15*)	3.35	4	0.813	2	4
Resistance skills (question 16*)	2.85	3	0.988	1	4
Resistance skills (question 17*)	2.95	3	0.999	1	4
Resistance skills (question 18*)	3.00	3.5	1.170	1	4
Resistance skills (scale 1)	9.90	9.38	2.342	6	13
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 13*)	2.85	3	1.089	1	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 14*)	2.21	2	0.976	1	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 19*)	2.80	3	0.951	1	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (scale 1)	6.00	6.33	1.918	3	8
Personal power (question 3*)	3.05	3	1.050	1	4
Personal power (question 6)	3.25	3	0.786	2	4
Personal power (question 7*)	2.70	3	1.081	1	4
Personal power (question 8*)	2.40	2.5	1.046	1	4
Personal power (question 9)	3.35	4	1.040	1	4
Personal power (scale 1)	6.55	7	1.956	2	9
Self esteem	3.65	4	0.813	1	4
Positive view of personal future (question 10)	3.35	4	1.086	1	4
Positive view of personal future (question 11)	3.40	3.5	0.681	2	4
Positive view of personal future (question 12)	2.45	2.5	0.887	1	4

* Indicates that measures were components of a scale for their respective assets.

Please also note that for question 26-29 as per Table 6, it is a good sign that the means and medians are so low; this indicates that the average participant did not commit violent acts onto others. The other pre test measures appear to indicate that many of the participants started off with

many protective factors: the majority of participants already had 3 or more supportive non-parental adults, often engaged in learning, often care about school, sometimes or often exhibited sense of interpersonal competence, are often comfortable with different cultures, often or almost always use resistance skills, often use peaceful conflict resolution, often use personal power, have high self esteem and almost always have a positive personal view of future. The scales reveal the same general trends, as the means tend to be toward the maximums on each scale instead of being closer to the minimums. The majority of the standard deviations are under one, which means that most of the answers are centered about the average, indicating there are not many outliers. These initial frequencies reveal the potential for a ceiling effect (there may not be much room for improvement).

Looking at the post-test frequencies, it appears that many of these assets decreased over time. At the program's end, the average participant reported having only two supportive adults, sometimes engages in learning, sometimes cares about school, sometimes or often uses resistance skills, sometimes uses peaceful conflict resolution, and sometimes or often engages in using personal power. The assets that remained somewhat unchanged over time were the interpersonal competence, being comfortable with different cultures, having a high self esteem and having positive views of personal future. Here, the standard deviations are about split between being above one and being below one, which indicates that there is a greater range of where the answers fall about the mean. The scales' means are not as close to the maximums anymore, which indicate that the mean is not as significant anymore. What happened was a regression to the mean over time, which may be due to a measurement error or a decrease in the number of participants' assets. This leaves the researcher wondering why the overall assets appear to decrease, which gives reason to perform higher level statistical analysis.

Table 8: Pre test measures for Alexander Middle School

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Support from non-parental adults	1.85	2	1.226	0	3
Learning engagement	3.00	3	0.973	2	4
Cares about school	3.25	4	1.020	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 22*)	2.72	2	1.018	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 23*)	2.68	3	1.003	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 24)	2.95	3	1.177	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 25)	1.74	2	1.046	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 26+)	1.11	0	1.286	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 27+)	1.05	1	1.268	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 28+)	1.05	0	1.311	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 29+)	1.32	1	1.376	0	3
Interpersonal competence (scale 2*)	5.39	5	1.819	3	8
Interpersonal competence (scale 3+)	8.67	8	4.243	4	16
Comfortable with different cultures	3.20	4	1.005	1	4
Resistance skills (question 15*)	3.21	4	1.084	1	4
Resistance skills (question 16*)	3.00	3	1.103	1	4
Resistance skills (question 17*)	3.16	4	1.167	1	4
Resistance skills (question 18*)	3.32	4	0.885	2	4
Resistance skills (scale 2*)	13.06	13	2.338	6	16
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 13)	3.37	4	0.831	2	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 14)	2.05	2	1.026	1	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 19)	3.32	4	0.885	2	4
Personal power (question 3)	3.05	3.5	1.099	1	4
Personal power (question 6)	3.50	4	0.688	2	4
Personal power (question 7)	3.00	3.5	1.237	1	4
Personal power (question 8)	2.37	2	1.065	1	4
Personal power (question 9)	3.55	4	0.759	1	4
Self esteem	3.79	4	0.535	2	4
Positive view of personal future (question 10*)	3.70	4	0.733	2	4
Positive view of personal future (question 11*)	3.45	4	0.759	2	4
Positive view of personal future (question 12*)	2.89	3	0.937	1	4
Positive view of personal future (scale 1*)	10.21	11	1.903	5	12

* indicates that measures were components of a scale for their respective assets
+ indicates that there were two scales for one particular asset.

Table 9: Post test measures for Alexander Middle School

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Support from non-parental adults	2.50	3	0.688	1	3
Learning engagement	3.26	3	0.733	2	4
Cares about school	3.00	3	0.918	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 22*)	3.05	3	0.945	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 23*)	2.95	3	1.050	1	4
Interpersonal competence (question 24)	3.30	3	0.733	2	4
Interpersonal competence (question 25)	2.00	2	0.795	1	3
Interpersonal competence (question 26+)	0.65	0	1.040	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 27+)	0.75	0	1.164	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 28+)	0.80	0	1.240	0	3
Interpersonal competence (question 29+)	0.75	0	1.164	0	3
Interpersonal competence (scale 2*)	6.00	6	1.806	3	8
Interpersonal competence (scale 3+)	7.00	5.5	4.104	4	16
Comfortable with different cultures	3.00	3	0.918	1	4
Resistance skills (question 15*)	3.35	3.5	0.745	2	4
Resistance skills (question 16*)	3.05	3	0.945	1	4
Resistance skills (question 17*)	3.15	3	0.875	1	4
Resistance skills (question 18*)	3.44	3.5	0.616	2	4
Resistance skills (scale 2*)	13.06	13	2.338	7	16
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 13)	3.32	3	0.671	2	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 14)	2.95	3	0.780	2	4
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 19)	3.15	3	0.875	1	4
Personal power (question 3)	3.21	3	0.713	2	4
Personal power (question 6)	3.58	4	0.607	2	4
Personal power (question 7)	3.21	3	0.918	1	4
Personal power (question 8)	3.16	3	0.958	1	4
Personal power (question 9)	3.32	4	0.820	2	4
Self esteem	3.50	4	0.889	1	4
Positive view of personal future (question 10*)	3.11	3	0.875	2	4
Positive view of personal future (question 11*)	3.00	3	0.943	2	4
Positive view of personal future (question 12*)	2.89	3	0.809	2	4
Positive view of personal future (scale 1*)	9.00	9	2.134	6	12

* indicates that measures were components of a scale for their respective assets and
+ indicates that there were two scales for one particular asset.

At the time of the pre-test (see Table 8), the average participant at Alexander had 1-2 supportive non-parental adults, often engaged in learning, often or almost always cared about school, sometimes exhibited interpersonal competence, was often or almost always comfortable

with different cultures, often or almost always used resistance skills, often used peaceful conflict resolution skills, sometimes or often had high personal power, almost always had high self esteems, and often or almost always had positive views of personal future. The scales appear to lean toward the maximum concerning positive view of personal future, but more toward the middle for interpersonal competence and resistance skills. Here, the standard deviations tend to be on the higher side, suggesting that the data are more spread out than those of Miami.

After going through VINTA at Alexander (as per Table 9), the average participant had 2-3 supportive non-parental adults, sometimes or often exhibited interpersonal competence, often used resistance skills, and often used peaceful conflict resolution. What remained relatively unchanged over time were the degrees of: being engaged in learning, caring about school, feeling comfortable with other cultures, having personal power, having high self-esteem, and having positive views or personal future. The scales appear to be in about the same spots as before, as well as the standard deviations. Though there appear to be some positive growths, there are still many assets that were unchanged.

Because both Miami and Alexander had so many assets that remained unchanged over time, there is room to investigate other factors that may have contributed to this. In addition, this leaves room to perform higher level statistical analysis to find out why some assets appear to decrease over time and others appear to increase over time. Taking the descriptive statistics of data does not indicate that the changes over time are significant or insignificant. Though the following analyses do shed light whether these changes over time are significant, it is important note that using such a small sample will not necessarily produce enough statistical power to yield meaningful results.

Testing for Statistical Significance in Developmental Assets over time

Miami Middle School. To find if the difference between the pre and post test scores were significant, the researcher utilized paired t-tests. These results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Discovering asset gain or loss over time at Miami

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
Asset 3: Support from non-parental adults	1.045(19)				
Asset 22: Learning engagement	1.633(19)				
Asset 24: Cares about school	3.637(18)**				
Asset 33: Interpersonal competence	- 4.023(18)**	1.455(18)	2.251(18)*	.900(18)	1.756(18)+
Asset 34: Comfortable with different cultures	-.484(19)				
Asset 35: Resistance skills	1.954(19)+				
Asset 36: Peaceful conflict resolution	1.469(17)				
Asset 37: Personal power	2.365(18)*	.767(19)	-1.710(19)		
Asset 38: Self esteem	.000(18)				
Asset 40: Positive view of personal future	1.371(19)	1.157(19)	1.000(19)		

Note: The first number report is the T statistic and the number in the parentheses is the degrees of freedom.
** $p<0.01$
* $p<0.05$
+ $p<0.1$

These results show that there are some significant changes over time for some assets, however they are not all in the positive direction. Though there appears to be some measurable gains with interpersonal competence, one measure reveals that after completing the program, a significant number of participants actually lost interpersonal competence instead of gaining it. This leaves room for investigating if this is a reliable measure or if this is just a better measure than the others because the change is so significant. The researcher believes that this is a more reliable measure than the ones that have positive results because the relationship between this asset and the change over time is so much stronger than all of the others; however, this could be misleading because the difference of significance at $p<.01$ and $p<.1$ may be negligible with such a small sample. The fact that this first measure is significantly large ($p<.01$) and the T statistic is significantly negative could suggest that something happened during the program's implementation;

however, two of the other measures reveal that some significant gains were also made, thus making this particular asset hard to interpret.

Significant gains were made in resistance skills and caring about school. The personal power acquisition is hard to interpret as well because though the first measure indicates significant improvement, the third measure indicates a negative direction with the T statistic. It is hard to understand why there is such discrepancy in these testing results, however it is important to know that the principal of this school did not support the implementation of VINTA and the director reported that staffing was unstable across the duration of the program. These implementation issues could potentially be impacting the outcomes. These results do not consider the role of participation in the program and/or the participants' maturation from the beginning of the school year to the end that that is unrelated to VINTA, so the causes for these outcomes are unknown; without a control group, there are too many uncertainties.

It is important to consider the role that active participation in the program has on student outcomes. Frequency distributions were performed using the sample (n=20) with respect to meeting the three program requirements that were previously outlined: 50% met requirement one, 30% met requirement two, and 50% met requirement three. Overall, 45% of the sample did not meet any requirement, 10% met only one requirement, 15% met two of the requirements, and 30% met all three. That is, only 6 out of the 20 students successfully "completed" the VINTA program and nine failed to meet any of the necessary minimums. This does leave room to question the precision of the recording; why is it that 20 participants were able to complete the pre and post-tests, but only half of the sample met only one program requirement? Because such a small portion of the tested sample met any type of requirement, determining the true relationship between active participation in VINTA and impact of developmental asset is hard to conclude. With so few cases meeting all of the requirements, the statistical analysis that was performed is not powerful enough

to detect meaningful results. The researcher had hoped to be able to look at this, but the no effect findings (reported below) reveal that the results may not be reliable because of the statistical power issue. To illustrate the best possible picture of the impact on participation in VINTA and gains in developmental assets, two way ANOVAs were used.

The data presented below suggest that the asset gain (or loss) was not due to the participation levels in the program; as indicated, there were no significant relationships between a student reaching a program requirement and the changes that took place from pre to post test.

Table 11: Impact that meeting program requirements had on asset gain or loss

	Attendance	Prevention Education Programming	Community Service/Leadership Development	Total requirements met
Support from non-parental adults	0.686	0.000	1.403	0.571
Learning engagement	0.316	1.200	0.137	0.331
Cares about school	0.872	1.403	0.113	0.624
Interpersonal competence (scale 1)	++	++	++	++
Interpersonal competence (question 22)	0.284	0.635	0.231	0.341
Interpersonal competence (question 23)	2.854	1.346	1.195	2.168
Interpersonal competence (question 24)	0.799	1.530	0.895	1.147
Interpersonal competence (question 25)	0.831	1.259	1.092	0.862
Comfortable with different cultures	0.063	0.083	0.614	0.114
Resistance skills	++	++	++	++
Peaceful conflict resolution	++	++	++	++
Personal power (scale 1)	++	++	++	++
Personal power (question 6)	0.423	0.328	1.736	0.432
Personal power (question 9)	0.177	0.419	2.956	0.324
Self esteem	++	++	++	++
Positive view of personal future (question 10)	0.248	0.005	0.024	0.067
Positive view of personal future (question 11)	0.424	0.132	0.441	0.393
Positive view of personal future (question 12)	0.251	0.707	0.509	0.138

Note: The first number reported is the F statistic and the number in the parentheses is the degree of freedom.
++ denotes that there was no measured change; the partial eta squared=0

The researcher wanted to learn if there was any type of correlation between meeting certain program requirements and meeting a different program requirement (because nothing was found to be statistically significant, this was of interest). Using Pearson correlations, meeting any of the three requirements was significant at p=.01 with participation in peacemaker training and attending VINTA awards; results are presented in Table 12.

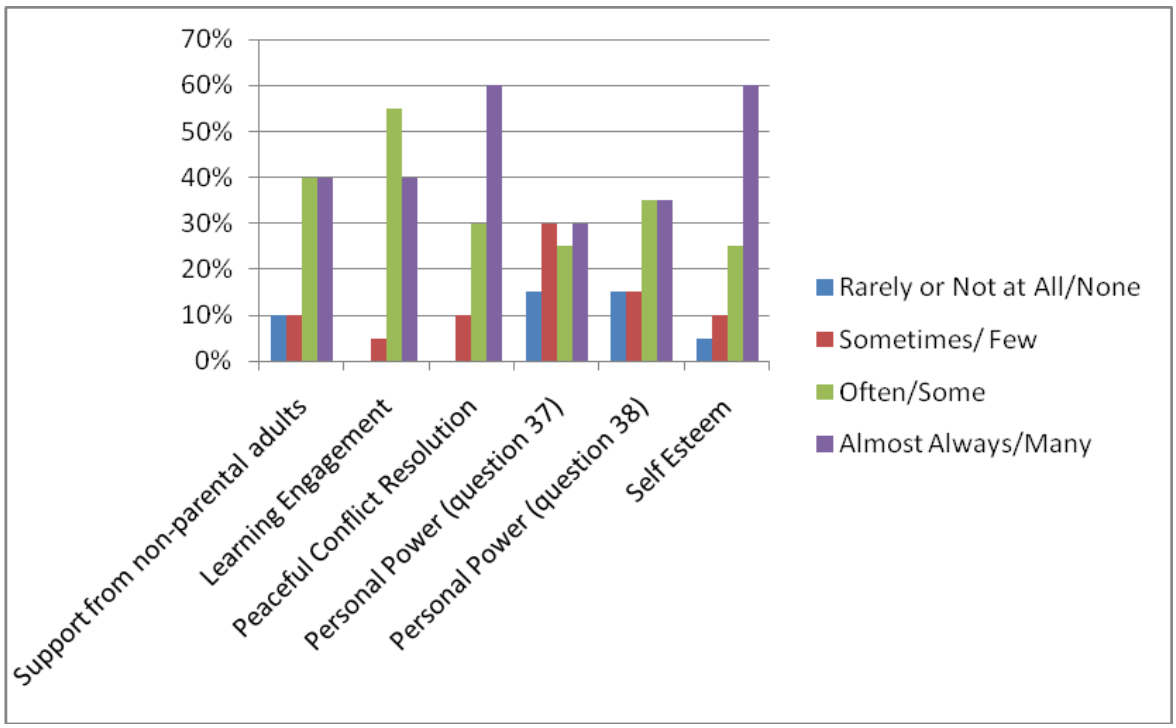
Table 12: Correlations in participation with other Violence is NOT the Answer components

	Peacemaker Training	VINTA Premier Awards
Requirement 1	0.612**	0.577**
Requirement 2	0.579**	0.630**
Requirement 3	0.612**	0.346
Having any requirement	0.671**	0.574**

** $p<0.01$

There were 11 questions that were only on the post-test survey. These questions were excluded from the primary analysis because there was no "time one" to compare the answers to; that is, no improvements could be measured using the post-test only questions. Instead, the researcher used those post test questions that had corresponding pre-test asset measures. Namely, for Miami Middle School, questions 31, 33, 35, 36, 37, and 38 measured the same assets that the instrument had pre-tested for (specifically support form non-parental adults, learning engagement, peaceful conflict resolution, personal power and self esteem); questions 30, 32 and 34 could not be compared to anything, thus it would be unknown if there were developmental asset gains as a result of participation in the program. Questions 39 and 40 were the open-ended questions and were analyzed separately from the quantitative analysis.

Chart 1: Frequencies of post-test only questions



In an attempt to use these post-test only questions, the researcher wanted to match the assets that these questions measured to the assets that the primary instrument measured. First, correlations were run between these post-test only questions and the post-test questions that measure the same asset. The correlations were completed in order to determine the strength between the post-test only questions and the post test questions on the primary survey instrument. The correlations for support from non-parental adults, learning engagement, and peaceful conflict resolution did not show to be significant relationships at $0<p<.1$, which suggest that perhaps the questions assigned to those assets were not the best measures. Personal power had two post-test only questions; though one question did not show a significant relationship to the question from the original questionnaire, the second question was significant ($R=.589$ at the $p<.01$ confidence level). This meant that this post-test question was significant with one post-test measure from the instrument, thus question 38 could potentially be used for further analysis. Finally, self esteem was found to have a significant

relationship from the post-test only to the regular questionnaire (R=.499 at p< .05 confidence level), thus this measure could also be potentially used for analysis.

Because the questions that measure personal power and self esteem have some promise to be significant ways to measure these assets, factor analyses were run with their corresponding pre-test questions. The measures that are reported below are the measures that yielded Eigenvalues of at least one. In order to see if these measures are actually reliable over time, a multi-item scale analysis between the post test question and the post test only question that measures each specific asset was completed. That is, the post-test only questions that measure personal power were analyzed with the personal power questions from the original instrument to see if these measures could be created into a multi-item scale (refer to methodology section for explanation of what this means). Because each asset's analysis yielded a significant value, a reliability analysis was also completed to ensure that these measures were reliable over time. These results are presented below.

Table 13: Checking reliability of post-test only questions

	Factor Analysis Eigenvalue	Reliability Analysis Alpha
Personal Power		
Measure 1 and Post test Only	1.744	0.820*
Measure 2 and Post test Only	1.359	0.518
Measure 3 and Post test Only	1.536	0.608*
Self Esteem		
Measure 1 and Post test Only	1.354	0.500

*Denotes that a>.6, and is thus a significant measure.

Results show that two of the measures for personal power prove to be reliable. To see if any changes took place over time regarding personal power, paired t-tests are needed. This analysis paired the pre-test measure for the personal power asset with the post-test only measure for personal power. These results are also presented below in Table 14. The final outcome is that a significant loss of personal power was found over time.

Table 14: Change over time for reliable post test only measures

Personal Power	T-Statistic
Personal power: Pre6 and Post 38	1.000(8)
Personal power Asset37PreScale1 and Post 38	-5.800(8)**

Note: The first number report is the T statistic and the number in the parentheses is the degree of freedom.
**p<.01

The next step is to determine if there are any significant relationships between meeting program requirements and asset gain or loss. After running two way ANOVAs, the researcher discovered that there were no significant relationships between meeting any program requirements and asset gain or loss (with respect to these post-test only measures). The open ended questions were coded by the primary researcher. With the open-ended format, the youth were able to introduce the aspects of the program that they thought were important rather than responding to multiple choice questions as prompted by the VINTA instrument. After reading all of the answers, the researcher created multiple categories for each question. During analysis, the same category codes were added together and overall percentages were calculated. The findings are reported below (n=20).

Chart 2: Answers from post-test only question 39

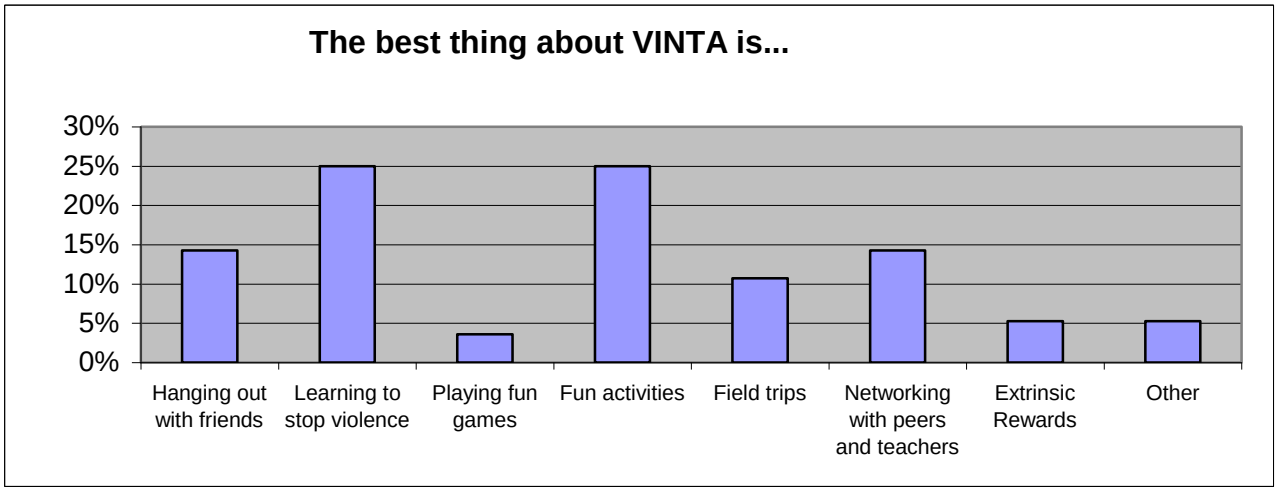
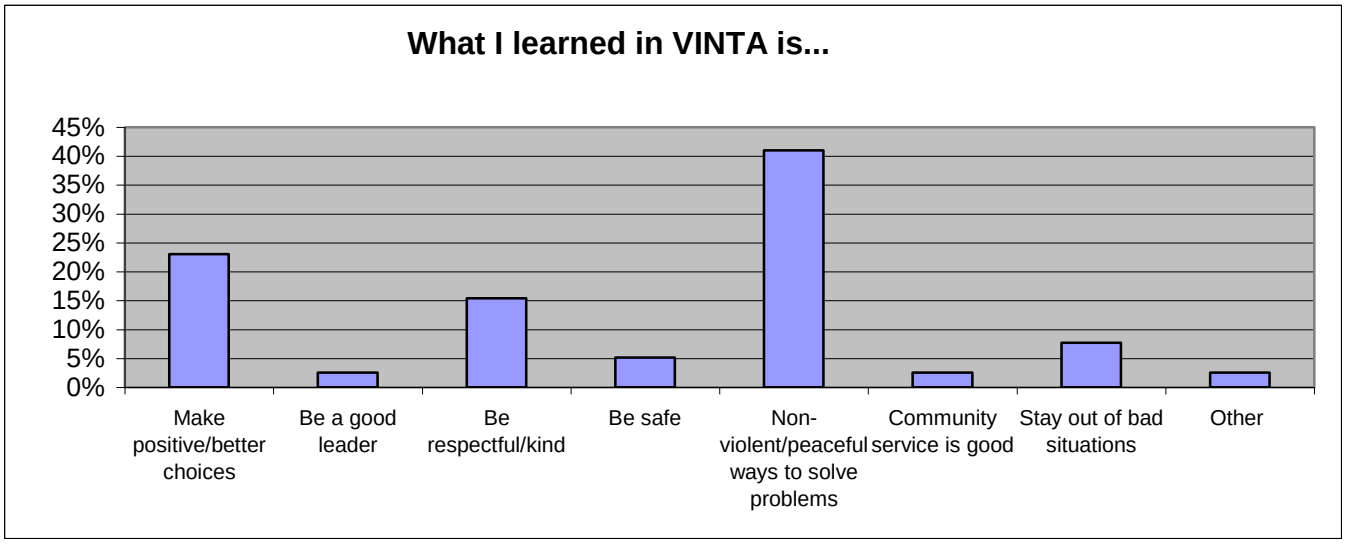


Chart 3: Answers from post-test only question 40.



It is apparent learning to stop violence and having fun activities were the main reasons that participants found VINTA to be enjoyable. Hanging out with friends and networking with peers and teachers were close behind. Learning non-violent or peaceful ways to solve problems was the overwhelming learned lesson, with making positive choices and being respectful/kind as close seconds.

Alexander Middle School. The results from the paired t-tests are organized in Table 15 and show that youth in the VINTA program at Alexander Middle School experienced a significant loss in some assets and a significant gain in others from the pre-test to the post-test. In particular, these results show that a significantly positive gain in a positive view of personal future was made by the end of the program, however there were significant losses in support from non-parental adults, peaceful conflict resolution and personal power. Because this does not consider the role of active participation, it is unclear what caused these declines of assets. One possibility could be that students without active participation are being considered in this group, thus their lack of participation in the program may have driven down the significant relationship.

Table 15: Discovering asset gain or loss over time at Alexander

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
Support from non-parental adults	-1.990(19)+				
Learning engagement	-1.000(18)				
Cares about school	0.815(19)				
Interpersonal competence	-1.320(17)	1.711(17)	-1.143(18)	-1.302(18)	
Comfortable with different cultures	0.972(19)				
Resistance skills	-0.135(16)				
Peaceful conflict resolution	0.489(17)	-3.796(17)**	0.417(18)		
Personal power	-0.776(18)	-0.622(18)	-0.212(16)	-2.000(17)+	1.097(18)
Self esteem	1.555(18)				
Positive view of personal future	2.361(17)*				

Note: The first number report is the T statistic and the number in the parentheses is the degree of freedom.
** $p<0.01$
* $p<0.05$
+ $p<0.1$

The active participation at Alexander Middle School was slightly different than that of Miami. Here, 26.3% (n=19) met the first requirement of having 30 hours of VINTA attendance. 36.8% met requirement 2 of having 10 lessons of prevention education programming, and 57.9% of the sample met requirement 3 of completing at least 3 leadership development or community service programs. In sum, 42.1% of the sample did not meet any requirement, 21.1% met one, 10.5% met two, and 26.3% met all three. The importance of attendance at Alexander might play a negligible role because 8 of the 20 participants did not meet any requirement and the statistical power might not be enough to produce meaningful results; regardless, two way ANOVAs and were used. These results are presented in Table 16.

The results presented in this table on page 60 are very different from what the t-tests revealed; this time, we see that there are either no measurable changes or significant improvements in developmental assets with the factor of meeting program requirements being considered. First, it is important to note that five of the measures (three assets) showed very significant improvements

(the F statistics are significantly large and the confidence level is $p<.01$) when the community service/leadership requirement was met. Resistance skills, personal power, learning engagement, and support from non-parental adults changed for the better when the attendance requirement was met. Learning engagement and support from non-parental adults also increased when the prevention education lessons were fulfilled; it's interesting that the resistance skills and/or peaceful conflict resolution were not more affected by this factor. It is still unclear what affected the positive view of personal future asset (as per the t-tests in Table 15). It is also clear that the support from non-parental adults significantly increased with meeting program requirements, so it is a mystery why this was a negative relationship (as per Table 15).

To find the association between meeting one program requirement and meeting a different requirement, correlation analyses were run. Meeting requirement one was significant at $p=.01$ with meeting requirement 2 with $R=.714$, but was not significant with meeting requirement three. Meeting requirement two was significant at $p=.01$ with meeting requirement one, but not meeting requirement three; so, meeting requirement three had no relationship in whether requirements one and two were met. Meeting any of the requirements and participation in peacemaker training and/or attending the VINTA awards could not be determined because of the limited data available. These results suggest that if a student met all three requirements, s/he was at least making requirements one and two ($R=.882$ and .910 at $p=.01$). For this reason, creating a table showing the correlation statistics between requirements met and peacemaker training/attending the VINTA awards is not relevant.

Table 16: Impact that meeting program requirements had on asset gain or loss

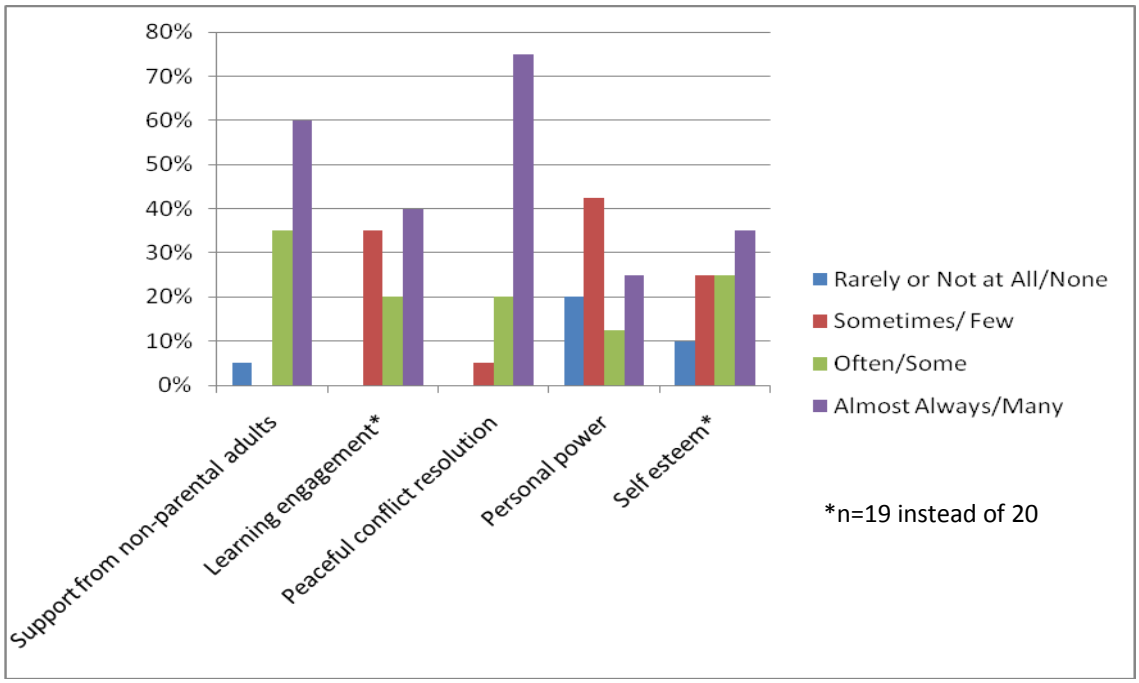
	Attendance	Prevention Education Programming	Community Service/Leadership Development	Total requirements met
Support from non-parental adults	4.531+	8.281*	0.781	3.003
Learning engagement	7.714*	4.286+	1.714	9.657*
Cares about school	0.818	0.010	1.111	0.476
Interpersonal competence (scale 1)	0.143	0.143	5.795E30**	0.571
Interpersonal competence (scale 2)	++	++	++	++
Interpersonal competence (question 24)	++	++	++	++
Interpersonal competence (question 25)	1.563	0.203	0.156	0.375
Comfortable with different cultures	1.667	0.441	1.831E31**	1.225
Resistance skills	2.671E30**	0.000	0.000	1.143
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 13)	0.090	0.459	0.395	0.001
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 14)	0.939	1.828	0.000	2.000
Peaceful conflict resolution (question 19)	0.364	0.205	0.045	0.282
Personal power (question 3)	1.374	0.315	0.385	0.154
Personal power (question 6)	2.352	1.263	1.460E31**	4.628+
Personal power (question 7)	4.000+	2.182	4.056E32**	8.741*
Personal power (question 8)	1.371	2.143	8.113E30**	3.600
Personal power (question 9)	++	++	++	++
Self esteem	++	++	++	++
Positive view of personal future	++	++	++	++

Note: The first number report is the F statistic and the number in the parentheses is the degree of freedom upon the intersection of the pre and post test questions with respect to the requirement.
** $p<0.01$
* $p<0.05$
+ $p<0.1$
++ denotes that there was no measured change; the partial eta squared=0

As mentioned earlier, the 11 questions that were only asked on the post-test were excluded from the primary analysis; these measures were later tested against their corresponding pre-test assets when applicable. The same process that was used for Miami was used for Alexander in terms of matching post-test only questions with the general questionnaire; questions 39 and 40 were the

open-ended questions and analyzed separately from the quantitative analysis. The frequencies of the answers for these relevant questions are reported blow in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Frequencies of Post-test only questions



Note: The personal power measures at Alexander were combined into a single measure; the factor and reliability tests came out to be strong, thus a multi-item scale was created for the post-test only measure of personal power. The factor analysis at Miami did not come out to be strong, thus multi-item scaling was not applicable at that school.

Correlations were run between these post-test only questions and the post-test questions that measure the same asset. Support from non-parental adults did not show to be significant at the $p<.1$ confidence level; one of the measures for peaceful conflict resolution and two of the measures for personal power were also insignificant. The other measures for learning engagement, peaceful conflict resolution, personal power and self esteem were found to be significant at $p<.05$ and $p<.01$. As previously mentioned, two of the post test only questions measured the same asset (personal power). Because these questions showed via factor analysis and reliability analysis that they could be combined into one post-test only measure, the researcher combined the two and created a new multi-item scale (Post37_38). To determine if these post-test only questions were valid, factor

analyses and reliability analyses were conducted (post test only measures were tested against the normal post test questions). These results are presented below in Table 17.

Table 17: Checking reliability of post-test only questions

	Factor Analysis	Reliability Analysis
Learning Engagement		
Measure 1 and Post test Only	1.244	0.377
Peaceful Conflict Resolution		
Measure 1 and Post test Only	1.412	0.579
Measure 2 and Post test Only	1.134	0.201
Personal Power		
Measure 1 and Post test Only	1.496	0.466
Measure 2 and Post test Only	1.372	0.333
Measure 3 and Post test Only	1.549	0.545
Self Esteem		
Measure 1 and Post test Only	1.706	0.971*

*Denotes that the a>.6 and therefore significant

These results show that only one of the post-test only questions is a reliable measure, according to the standards of this questionnaire. To find if self esteem had a change over time, a paired t-test was conducted between the pre-rest measures for self esteem and this post test only. The results show that this is a significant, positive change over time, T(4.014), df=17, p=.001 (two tailed). Knowing that this post test only question is reliable, the researcher then completed two-way ANOVAs to test the affects of meeting a program requirement and gaining the asset. The researcher found that there were no measurable changes between asset gain and meeting a program requirement(s). The open ended questions were coded the same way as they were for Miami; the findings are reported on the following page (n=18; there were 2 missing cases). It is apparent learning to stop violence and having fun activities were the main reasons that participants found VINTA to be enjoyable; playing fun games was the next best thing about participation in VINTA. Learning non-violent or peaceful ways to solve problems was the overwhelming learned lesson, with making positive choices and being respectful/kind as close seconds.

Chart 5: Answers from post-test only question 39

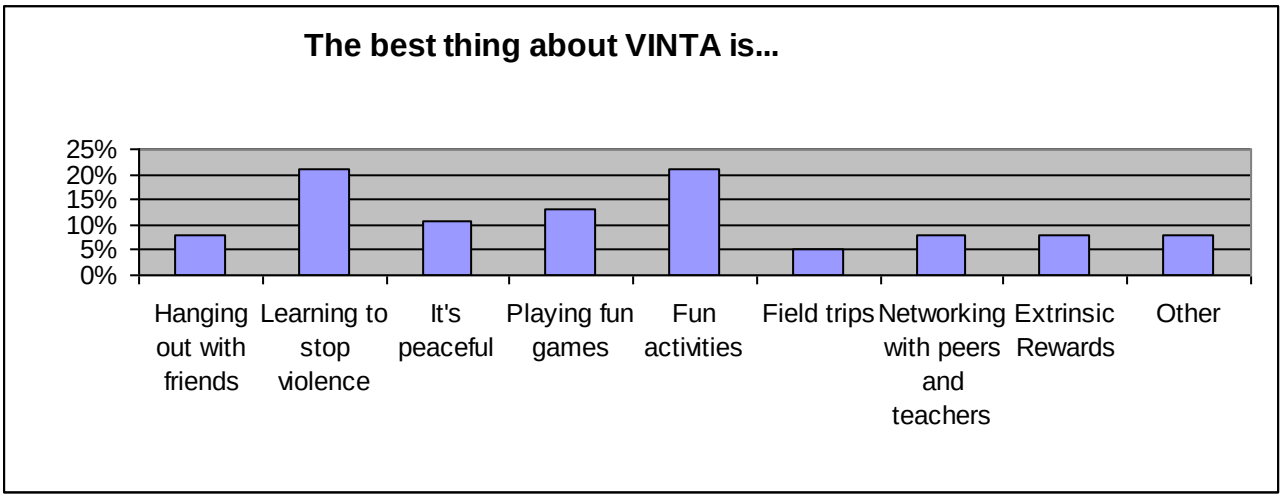
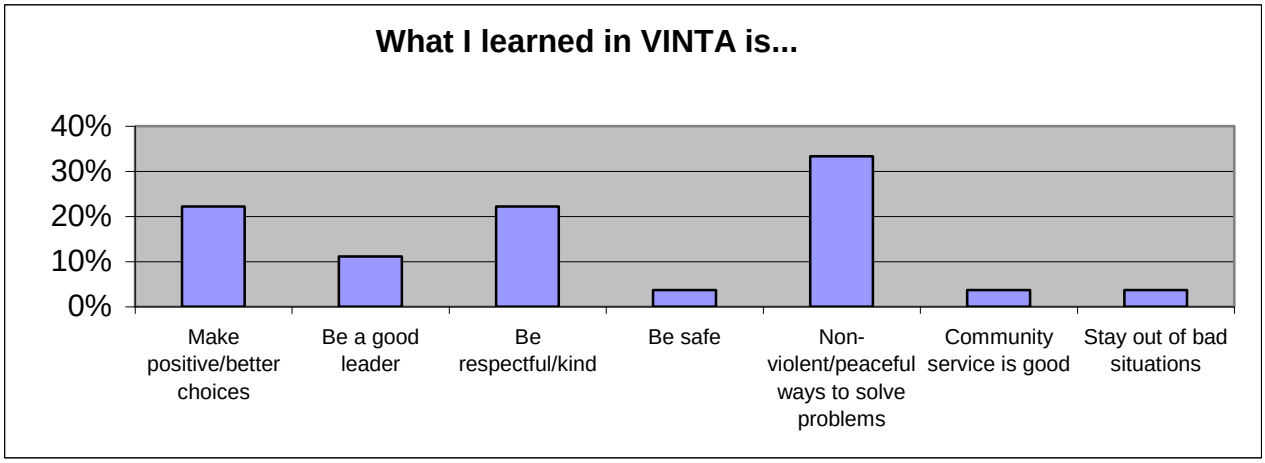


Chart 6: Answers from post-test only question 40



Note: There were no answers that fit into the "other" category at this school.

To better organize the findings of these statistical analyses, a summary table (Table 18) was created by the researcher. This table includes all of the positive and negative changes that occurred between the time of the pre and post test. The table also shows the gains that were made when program requirements were met by the participants. Note that the table only reports positive gains associated with meeting program requirements because no negative outcomes were derived from these analyses.

Table 18: Summary of asset change at each school

	Miami	Franklin
Positive change over time	Cares about school**	Positive view of personal future+
	Resistance skills+	
	Interpersonal competence+˚	Self esteem**
	Interpersonal competence+˚	
Negative change over time	Interpersonal competence**	Support from non-parental adults+
	Personal Power**	Peaceful conflict resolution**
		Personal power*
Positive change over time by meeting attendance requirements		Support for non-parental adults+
		Learning engagement*
		Resistance skills**
		Personal power+˚
Positive change over time by meeting prevention education requirements		Support from non-parental adults*
		Learning engagement*
Positive change over time by meeting service/leadership requirements		Interpersonal competence**˚
		Comfortable with different cultures**
		Personal power**˚
		Personal power**˚
		Personal power**˚
Positive change over time by meeting any of the requirements		Learning engagement*
		Personal power*˚
		Personal power+˚

** p<0.01
* p<0.05
+ p<0.1
˚denotes that there were multiple measures for the asset

Conclusions and Discussion

Summary of Findings

Before making any conclusions, it must be noted that the outcomes generated from the analyses have potential to be a bit misleading because of the small sample size. There may not have been enough statistical power to indicate whether a factor (like meeting a program requirement) influenced asset change over time, but the positive outcomes of VINTA do imply that program is making adequate progress.

It's interesting that Miami's results differed so much from those of Alexander. At Miami, there were many positive changes over time; however, these changes are not attributed to participating in the program. This means that either there were other factors that affected asset gain

that were not being measured by VINTA, or VINTA's requirement standards do not match the curriculum that was implemented (that is, setting requirement one as needing 30 hours of participation in meetings/activities may be too high of a standard considering the number of opportunities to attend these events). Perhaps there was maturation over time from the beginning to the end of the school year that caused participants to gain development assets. In particular, the assets that were gained at Miami were caring about school, resistance skills, and interpersonal competence; these gains may be developmentally appropriate to make in a year's time as a middle schooler[12].

In addition to the positive gains at Miami, there were also negative changes over time. Again, these negative changes were not attributed to participating in the program, thus outside factors were most likely influencing asset change. Because interpersonal competence was more significantly a negative change than it was a positive change, the accuracy of the survey tool as an instrument is called into question. It could be that the multiple questions that measured interpersonal competence differed too much to truly measure this asset; for example, perhaps the wording elicited a certain response on some questions, which skewed the data. It is hard to make one clear assertion as to why there were both positive and negative gains with respect to interpersonal competence. The other developmental asset that experienced negative change over time was personal power. It could be that the instability at Miami (in terms of changing coordinators three times, low support from the school principal, etcetera) caused students to feel that they had little personal power in their lives; perhaps they were more confident in their ability to assert themselves at the beginning of the year than they were at the end.

[12] Literature does indicate that in high risk environments such as poorly performing schools, downwards trends as children transition into adolescents occur if those children did not have adequate support for growth to promote resiliency (Winfield, 1994).

The open ended responses suggest that potential gains in learning peaceful conflict resolution were made: learning to stop violence was the "best thing" about VINTA and learning non-violence was the most learned lesson according to the responses. However, this potential asset gain was not indicated in the statistical analysis. This could imply that perhaps more lessons were learned than what the survey measures. These responses should be considered in a semi-critical lens, however; because the surveys were administered by the coordinator, it could be that students wrote what they thought the coordinator wanted to see (that is, they did not want to disappoint the coordinator). This could mean that these answers are a bit inaccurate, but because this is only speculation, we cannot fully accept or disregard the open ended answers.

At Alexander, there were many significant gains made that are attributed to both active participation in VINTA and just being a member of VINTA. For the same reasons as above, we should look at these outcomes through a critical lens only because there appear to be factors influencing the asset gain that are outside of VINTA's control. What is important about the gains at Alexander is that the majority of asset gain was achieved through meeting programs requirements. Support from non-parental adults, learning engagement, resistance skills, personal power, interpersonal competence, and being comfortable with different cultures are all gains that are directly associated with meeting at least one of these program requirements (attendance, prevention education lessons, and/or participating in community service/leadership development). In particular, participating in community service and/or leadership development had the most measured gains over time (57.9% of the sample met this requirement). These results reveal that active participation in VINTA may lead to more asset gains over time.

Though the positive gains outweigh the negatives, it is important to address that support from non-parental adults, peaceful conflict resolution and personal power decreased over time at Alexander. Of course, these negative changes do not consider the role of participation in VINTA,

thus students with low attendance could be driving down the statistics. Because 42.1% of the sample did not meet at least one requirement, it is hard to determine how those individuals were affected by VINTA. There were such positive outcomes when program requirements were met that it seems that these negative outcomes must be associated with factors that are outside of VINTA's control. In particular, support form non-parental adults was a significantly positive change over time when program participation was considered; this could imply that the key to ensuring positive youth development for VINTA participants is to keep the students actively engaged in the program.

The open ended questions also reveal that learning peaceful conflict resolution was a result of VINTA's implementation, but again, these results are not reflected in the statistical analysis. This finding is particularly important since peaceful conflict resolution was found to have negative change over time in the statistical analysis. Though there are many unknown factors (like how honest the students were on their surveys), it is important to note that results indicate positive and negative changes over time with respect to peaceful conflict resolution. Since the goal of VINTA is to teach violence prevention and peaceful decision making, this particular asset is very important to analyze. Unfortunately, the limitations of the dataset and sample size do not allow for an in-depth analysis of this asset.

It is important to note that though the open ended questions at both schools suggest that the participants learned peaceful conflict resolution, we are unsure of how much they learned. Though the main focus of the program was to empower youth through results oriented programming and services to prevent violence and promote healthy lives, it is hard to decipher if this goal was truly achieved. The original two hypotheses for this study were: 1) students engaged in the Violence is NOT the Answer school-based primary violence prevention program will gain developmental assets from the beginning of the program to the end of the program; and 2) the greater the engagement in VINTA activities the greater the gains in developmental assets over time. It seems like the first

hypothesis is somewhat true considering that the majority of asset changes over time were positive, but because of the negative outcomes, this cannot be fully supported; the researcher must therefore reject the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis has much more evidence-based support, according to the analyses, for greater engagement in VINTA activities leading to greater asset gains over time. Whereas asset change over time had both positive and negative outcomes for each school, there were only positive results that came from meeting program requirements, which suggests that active participation is a better way to ensure positive asset gain. There was a null affect of program participation at Miami, but because of the instability of the program, we are unsure if the lacks of support from the school and/or changing coordinators were the issues. If these preceding factors were controlled for, the results may look different with respect to asset gain and meeting program requirements. Due to the limitations of the study, it would be inappropriate to make a conclusion as to whether VINTA was 100% effective. What is more fitting for the current study is to suggest ways that VINTA can improve its implementation; with slight alterations, the research setting and data would be more sturdy and the analysis would have more statistical power that would enable researchers to draw more concrete conclusions.

Suggestions for Improvement

Because the middle school programs were only funded for a year, VINTA did not have the resources or intentions to make improvements to the program. The following are mere suggestions from the researcher based on the knowledge and results of VINTA; perhaps these suggestions can be applicable to the high school programs that are currently operating or for future programs that may be reestablished at the middle school level when the funding situation gets better.

The survey instrument. The survey questions should be revised to better suit the needs of evaluation research. For example, to measure if a student is engaged in learning, questions should be asked about the relationship with the teacher, not just if the student “cares about [his] teachers”.

Further, the teachers should be given pre and post tests that ask their opinions about the students; because the survey is self-report via participants, the chances for dishonesty are large. If there is another survey to compare the answers to, perhaps we would get a better read on the actual asset improvements that the students make. Because having multiple perspectives does leave room for contradicting answers (in the event that a student think s/he is engaged in the classroom but the teacher believes s/he is not), there should be at least one other way to remedy the issue of the questions' wording. A great way to remedy this issue is to use all of the Search Institute's (1990) survey instead of just parts that are inspired by the Search Institute's. The Institute's questions are developed and tested by expert researchers in the field; though the staff at VINTA is comprised of highly qualified practitioners, it appears that their knowledge in statistical analysis and data collection is somewhat limited. Not only will using the Search Institute's survey save the VINTA staff time and energy, but it will also assure evaluators that the survey has valid and reliable measures.

The questions in general are directed toward all elements of positive youth development, not just youth violence prevention. If the goal of the program is to decrease youth violence, the questions that ask about involvement in school are relevant but not central to violence prevention per say. That is, the assets are meant to be used a framework for healthy youth development, not specifically anti-violence. A better conceptualization of VINTA's part about how the assets link with violence prevention is needed. For example, the learning engagement asset is defined as "child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning at school and enjoys participating in learning activities outside of school" (Search Institute, 1990). Literature says that teaching violence prevention in the schools increased from 73.4% in 2000 to 83.6% in 2006, teaching in middle schools increased from 71.6% to 83.8%, and teaching in high schools increased from 74.5% to 85.0% (SHPPS, 2006). VINTA staff can link this information to the learning engagement asset

because perhaps the more engaged in learning a student is, the more s/he will absorb violence prevention skills that are taught in VINTA. By putting the assets in a violence prevention context, the framework might become a bit more relevant for the program.

Using the Developmental Asset framework is a good idea because it uses a holistic approach (which takes all aspects of people's needs into account, including those that are psychological, physical and social), however more consideration needs to be given between what VINTA wants to measure and what they do with the prevention curriculum. For example, assessing gains in peaceful conflict resolution is a really clear indicator of whether the violence prevention curriculum is effective; because the only measure of this asset is through pre and post surveys, some data might be getting lost throughout the year. Maybe at the end of each quarter, students could role play certain scenarios; the way they react to a violent act or an observation of bullying can indicate if they have learned the skills to resolve conflict peacefully. This way, the link between an asset and violence prevention is clearer. Taking a holistic approach has many benefits, but it seems that VINTA is not taking advantage of all of them. Currently, it seems that VINTA is addressing the physical and psychological needs of its participants (learning how to prevent violence and feeling empowered, respectively), but without taking the social component into consideration, there are chances that students will not get the full holistic approach of the developmental assets. Since there are not enough questions on other areas, the students may be changing without the staff knowing. Though a student might be learning how to handle a violent situation when s/he is a victim, s/he might not be getting enough information about how to handle a violent situation when s//he is a bystander. There should be a more distinct link between asset gain and youth violence de-escalation.

Another suggestion would be to balance the number of questions per asset measured. Because some assets had seven measures and others only had one, analysis became very

complicated. Though it makes sense to have multiple measures per asset, it would be better for data analysis purposes to have the same number of measures for every asset. In addition, there is an imbalance of internal versus external assets (of the measurable assets, only one was internal compared to the nine that were external). There does not appear to be any logical reason why this is so unbalanced, other than some of the external assets rely on parental involvement and community interaction, which might be hard to quantify. The Executive Director explained that the assets were chosen according to three qualifications: they could be possibly impacted by the program, they could be addressed by program strategies, and they were age appropriate (Executive Director, personal communication, February 12, 2010). The researcher's suggestion would be to add in questions that address more internal assets by having parents fill out surveys. Distributing a parental/guardian survey twice a year (when the students take their respective pre and post tests) could help measure if a child is taught positive values like equality, integrity and healthy lifestyles as well as parental involvement[13] (assets 27, 28, 31, and 6). The issues with this could potentially be the problem of having multiple perspectives; that is, what a child perceives and what a parent/guardian perceives might be completely different. Checking if a child participates in another extra-curricular activity or in a religious community would not be difficult to do (assets 18 and 19). The tricky questions about feeling valued, safe, etc could be where the Search Institute's pre-written questions could help. The full surveys do cost money to purchase from the Search Institute ($500 or more for the packets and reports), but there are free samples online that can be used. There are a total of six different surveys; they range in the ages they address, so different surveys can be used for the different schools. The questions that VINTA have appear to have overlap with those of the Search Institute (question 23 on VINTA's survey reads "I can calm myself down pretty quickly

[13] VINTA does distribute parental surveys, but parents are not identified. Because of this, it is unknown if each parent had an actively involved child. It would be crucial to match parents with children because this would help discover more possible asset gains. Because of this limitation, these surveys were excluded from the analysis.

when I get mad" and question 17 on the Search Institute's *Me and My World* survey reads "I usually stay pretty calm when things don't go my way"), but perhaps by using the exact surveys, VINTA will have more success.

It would appear that the survey has the capacity to investigate gains in other external developmental assets by seeking participation of school officials. For example, handing homework in on time (asset 23) and assessing achievement motivation (asset 21) could be reported by asking a teacher to keep track of homework completion and releasing report cards to the coordinators. Another way to accomplish this could be for the coordinators to ask the teachers four times a year about the student's academic status/progress. This way, the coordinators know the other factors in a student's life that might be affecting outcomes on the surveys; it could also reveal what assets need to be more heavily targeted to provide enough support for student growth. Of course, this suggestion assumes that the school staff and administration want VINTA to be implemented in the schools, and we know from personal communication with the Executive Director that this was not the case at Miami. Though the instrument might be longer, adding more measures could give researchers and evaluators much more to analyze.

Something else to consider is whether the questions that are being asked on the survey are actually measuring the asset they are assigned to by the Executive Director. This must be considered because it is possible that some measures might actually be showing gains in other asset areas. For example, question two reads "I participate in my classes at school by answering questions and doing my homework". This is supposed to measure learning engagement, but it seems like it could also measure handing homework in on time (asset 23) because of its wording. Another example could be question five, which reads "I am friends with kids who look different than me, speak different than me, and cannot do things that I do". This is supposed to measure cultural competence, but a student might interpret this as having a positive peer group, which is asset 15.

Ultimately, one limitation with the survey is that out of 40 assets, only 10 were measurable. Essentially, the students might have made other gains, but those gains are not reflected in the data and consequently the results.

One way to account for unexpected gains could be to use specific open ended questions. The two questions that the instrument currently has are a bit too vague. The researcher believes that the wording is somewhat "loaded" and elicits a certain response from the participants. By asking what "the best thing" is, the answers are more likely going to be positive because the wording does not allow for a negative response. To better balance this, the question should read "Describe your experience in VINTA. What did you like about it? What did you not like about it? Please provide at least two examples to support your opinion." This way, the students have the option to voice their opinion, whether positive or negative, and they are encouraged to provide reasons that support their opinions. This gives much more information than just asking what the "best thing" was. What would be even better is to ask "What did you learn over the past year from VINTA? Please provide at least 2 examples" because then during the coding of this question, it could be quantified if a student actually gained resistance skills or peaceful conflict resolution skills. The Executive Director and coordinators can come up with a list of possible answers that would be considered a response for learning peaceful conflict resolution and/or resistance skills. For example, a student may respond to this question with: "I learned that it can be really dangerous to hang out with the wrong groups of kids. Instead, I learned to become involved with activities that aren't centered on violence or making fun of people. I also learned to tell adults when I see an event that might be dangerous for someone else." A response like this might match one of the possible ways that resistance skills or peaceful conflict resolution skills are learned in VINTA. On the other hand, a response like "I learned that bullying is bad" does not suggest that a student learned any non-violence skills. The current responses to the open ended questions included answers like: "I learned

non-violent ways to talk". This is too vague of an answer because we do not know if the student actually learned something or if that is just what he thinks the directors want to read. The suggested open ended question has a quantitative component and measures an asset instead of just giving vague feedback about the program. In sum, being specific with questions could potentially yield much better results.

Finally, the program should consider balancing the number of pre and post test questions. By having post-test only questions, there is no way of having a comparison. Having a "time 1" and "time 2" is a much better way to measure change. In particular, some of these post-test only questions measured an asset that was not measured on the pre test. This is a problem because it is unknown what the starting point was of the asset; there is no way to tell if there was change over item when the asset is only being measured after the program's implementation.

The survey procedure. There is a clear problem with the way that surveys are administered: the director of the program at each school distributes them, watches students fill them out, and then collects each survey. This has potential to skew the results of the data because the students might not be honest knowing that they are being watched by the director. Instead, a third party, someone unaffiliated with VINTA, should distribute and collect the surveys so that the responses are not skewed by the presence of mentor-figure (this is a "blind" way to collect data). Because the students put their names on the surveys, their answers might not be completely true. Perhaps the students are afraid of the director judging their answers, and because their names are on the surveys, there is zero privacy. Further, it might be counter-productive to have the students identify themselves on these surveys because their personal sense of safety in answering might be compromised. If the point of VINTA is to promote safety, self-identification seems like a step back. It could be much more useful to have the students create pseudonyms for themselves from the beginning of the year so that there is never personally identifying information associated with a specific child. If teachers

or parents contribute to data collection, the student can release their pseudonyms to these adults so that the pseudonym is consistently used.

Meeting program requirements. There appeared to be a problem with the participants meeting the program requirements: out of the 20 participants in each sample, only 11 and 12 students at Miami and Alexander respectively, met any of the program requirements. Perhaps an incentive program should be set up to further encourage students to participate. This could even incorporate the school's participation to encourage other students to join VINTA. For example, maybe for meeting one requirement, students get a pizza party; perhaps for meeting all 3, students get a free homework pass. Of course, these are just examples, but it could be a great way to not only get the participation rates up higher among VINTA participants, but also increase the number of students in the schools engaged in the violence prevention program.

Because the measures for meeting program requirements were different for each school, it is hard to compare the results. For example, had the standards not been as high at Miami, perhaps there would have been a relationship between meeting a program requirement and gaining an asset. Further investigation would go back through the data and create one way to account for attendance, prevention education lessons, and community service/leadership development at each school. This way, the units of measurement will be the same and a true comparison about which program was more effective at what school could be determined.

Creating two different program requirements out of requirement three should be considered (regarding the community service/leadership development requirement). There were high relationships between meeting this requirement and gaining an asset, but it is hard to know if the community service had this impact or if it was the leadership development. Since leadership development and community service were two different objective strategies, they should be measured by two different requirements.

Using a different approach for program implementation. The literature suggests that comprehensive programming that has community involvement is the best way to have the most impact of at-risk youth. Because community service is an activity that brings together the community and school microsystems, community service is a perfect way to start a comprehensive program. Connecting asset gains to existing resources (like the community service) would prove to be beneficial for the students and staff. First, the students would be able to translate and apply what they learned in school to their real worlds. If a student learns a strategy but does not know how to make it applicable to everyday life, the time spent learning that skill is somewhat useless. For example, if a youth learns that in school we respect and care about teachers, how is that youth supposed to take that learned strategy and apply it to the community s/he lives in? What might be more helpful is to teach that in life we respect and care about other adults. During community service projects, the youth could potentially get practice to work with other adults who they may not see on a daily basis: in school, the youth get practice to work with teachers, and at home, youth get the opportunity to work with parents, aunts, uncles, etc. By connecting lessons to existing resources, the youth are able to be successful in multiple microsystems, including the home, school, *and* community. Because the highest asset gain occurred when students met the community service/leadership development requirement, it makes the most sense to build more activities that are community-based.

It might be beneficial for VINTA to use a different strategy to build developmental assets. The pre test could be a general questionnaire that targets many different assets. After assessing which assets students already have, the program should be designed to improve those assets that are not present in the students' lives. This would mean that the pre-test is a planning tool for program implementation. Of course, this would mean that each program would have to tailor to the needs of the students, which would mean a lot of work every year by the directors. It would be hard to

compare two different schools if they had two different programs, but a general analysis of how effective each program is at its respective school could still be done. This design would be more beneficial to the participants because the program would be tailored to their needs. A post-test survey would measure that the youth still have all of their starting assets while measuring what previously non-present assets were gained over time.

Another idea is to have some sort of control group. There is no way to know if students in VINTA have more assets than students who do not participate in VINTA. It would be interesting to know the differences that exist in asset gain over time between a controlled group and an experimental group. This would require consent from non-VINTA participants (and their parents), but it would be very easy to do. The non-VINTA participants would take the same pre and post test survey as the VINTA participants do; if other data were being collected from teachers and/or parents, this would also be the same). The sample sizes would have to be the same, and ideally, the demographic information should be the same (the same number of girls and boys, the same ratios in terms of ethnicity/race, etc). This would provide an even deeper level of analysis and perhaps show that any type of participation in this program is better than not participating in the program.

Implications of VINTA Premier Awards. One of the activities in this component of VINTA is to have peacemaker training. This program teaches youth how to become peacemakers in their schools and in their communities. The program has multiple elements: attendance in a one-day violence prevention training, developing a violence prevention presentation in the forms of a visual or fine art to present at the end of the year awards ceremony, and participating in a peace march and city wide peace camp. Students get attendance credit in VINTA for participating and/or attending the end of the year ceremony. The participation at this event was very low and the attendance was even lower (this was the case for both schools). It's hard to pinpoint the reason why participation was so low, but one could speculate a few options: the inconsistent staffing at Miami might not

have brought enough manpower to encourage participation; there may not have been enough support to help students prepare for the ceremony; because the ceremony was not a program requirement for participation, students did not take it seriously; or perhaps parents or peers didn't think of this as an important event. In any case, the program itself seemed to be a success: participation from the elementary and high school programs was particularly high, and the community audience enjoyed the show. A brainstorming session between the coordinators of each program at the elementary, middle and high schools should take place. A staff collaboration could identify what strategies work and do not work in regards to encouraging participation.

Limitations to the current study

The survey instrument is somewhat limiting to the data it can collect. Some assets were measured by seven questions when other assets only had one measure. In addition, having post-test only questions does not show improvement to an asset because there is nothing to compare it to. It might be more beneficial to have multiple measures for the same asset; having more than one is a great idea, but having seven measures for one asset and only having one measure for another asset creates imbalance in the data collection. The wording of the survey questions was loaded. One question asserted "I handle conflicts with my brothers and/or sisters in a peaceful way". This wording assumes that every student has a sibling. What would an only child answer in this case? It might be more sensitive to instead have the question read "I handle conflicts with my siblings or peers in a peaceful way".

Overall, the summary of findings has a few limitations. First, the sample sizes created a great issue because statistical analysis requires larger numbers to perform the tests on. To start, most of these analyses are computed assuming that the data is normally distributed. With a sample of n=20, the chances that the data is normal is very slim. When a sample size is larger, the data has a better chance of showing a normal distribution. As mentioned earlier, smaller samples have lower

statistical power during analysis; this could lead to some of the outcomes being a bit skewed. In addition, some of the tests pulled from an even smaller sample (ie: the two way ANOVAs); if only 12 out of 20 students have data on their attendance, the sample size is greatly restricted. Ideally, every recorded participant would have had a pre and post test survey to analyze, however because of attrition, geographical relocation (moving out of town) and/or the method that participation is encouraged, this was not the case.

Another limitation to the study is the role of the researcher in the data collection. Because the datasets were given by the Executive Director to the researcher, the researcher was not able to organize or enter data that would help in further analysis. This is best shown with the issues of having different measures of program requirements (30 vs. 40 hours of program participation and 10 lessons vs. 25 hours of prevention education programming). Having two different benchmarks makes it hard to compare the two schools because the same standard is not being used.

Because the surveys were not administered by a third party, there is an issue of the validity of the respondents' answers. Knowing that the director of the program was in the room, a student might have been untruthful because s/he wanted to impress the director or did not want to "let her down". In addition, the students' names were on the surveys, so the student knew that the director would see all of the provided answers. The issue of privacy could have also affected the survey responses. Of course, this is all speculation but because there was no pseudonym coding and no third party intervention, it is hard to decipher if the data is legitimate.

The programs at the middle school were in their first year when the data were taken; in addition, the Executive Director had a very short time to hire and train staff for the academic year. Though the implementation for the middle schools' programs was mimicked from the VINTA programs at the two elementary and high schools, there are still bound to be unforeseen errors. The programs at the high and elementary schools have been around for at least four years, which could

suggest that they have had ample time to improve their programs. Because the middle school programs were evaluated at their first year, it is hard to conclude whether the success (or lack thereof) is because of the program's implementation or the lack of experience for the program overall. In addition, evaluation at the other schools would have been able to be somewhat longitudinal in that multiple records of datasets could be analyzed to show change over time; this is not possible with a first-year program.

Future Studies

Typically, longitudinal studies are ideal to measure changes over time. Because of budget and time issues, this was not possible for the current study. It would be interesting to follow the same group of kids through the high school level VINTA program to see what assets are gained as teenagers. Ultimately, it would be interesting to see how long-term participation affects asset gain. This evaluation should be completed at the elementary and high school levels; this would allow us to discover the strengths and weaknesses of VINTA across the board. It would be interesting to start this evaluation with the elementary level and complete it every year until graduation. Then, comparing the results with a control group would really give VINTA a rigorous evaluation. Ideally, future studies should follow the same group of students through; however with the termination of the middle school programs, this wouldn't be possible. According to research, the longer a youth stays in a violence prevention program, the more positive and significant the outcomes are, so comparing the students who stay in the program throughout elementary, middle and high school with the students who drop out of it would potentially provide a strong evidence-based support of the importance of longevity in a program. Though this report is complete considering the limitations, a larger evaluation would provide much more feedback on the general outcomes of VINTA on participants who range in age from seven to eighteen.

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Appendix A: Pre/Post Test Survey Tool

Note: Questions 30-40 appear exclusively on the post-test.

1. I have __trusted adults that I can tell my problems and get help, who are not my parents.	6. I believe that I decide how my like turns out.	11. I know, when I grow up, I will have a good life.	16. I stay away from people who get in trouble.
0,1,2,3 or more	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always
2. I participate in my classes at school by answering questions and doing my homework.	7. The choice I make at school result in how I am treated by adults.	12. I handle conflicts with my peers in a peaceful way.	17. If friends were trying to get me involved in something negative, I would be able to avoid the situation.
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always
3. If I make a bad choice, I make a better choice the next time.	8. The choices I make at school result in how I am treated by other students.	13. I handle conflicts with my teachers in a peaceful way.	18. If family members were trying to get my involved in something negative, I would be able to avoid the situation.
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always
4. I care about my teachers.	9. I believe I can achieve my goals.	14. I handle conflicts with my brothers and/or sisters in a peaceful way.	19. I choose non-violence to resolve my conflicts.
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always
5. I am friends with kids who look different than me, speak different than me, and cannot do things that I do.	10. I know I will be successful in middle school.	15. I say “no” when someone wants me to do things that are wrong.	20. I feel bad when I am made fun of.
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always

21. I am glad to be me.	26. In the past week, I said mean things about another student to make other kids laugh __times.	31. I am excited about coming to school when there are Violence is NOT the Answer activities going on.	36. In Violence is NOT the Answer, I have learned ___skills that help me settle conflicts without violence.
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	0, 1, 2, 3 or more	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	None, Few, Some, Many
22. I stay calm when things don't go my way.	27. In the last week, I pushed or shoved another student __times.	32. I like school more because I participate in Violence is NOT the Answer.	37. By being a member of Violence is NOT the Answer, I am able to improve things about my school.
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	0, 1, 2, 3 or more	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always
23. I can calm myself down pretty quickly when I get mad.	28. In the last week, I called another person bad names __ times.	33. I am proud to be a member of Violence is NOT the Answer.	38. Because of participating in Violence is NOT the Answer, I feel I can make a positive difference in my community.
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	0, 1, 2, 3 or more	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always
24. I care about how other people feel.	29. In the last week, I made fun of another person __ times.	34. The Violence is NOT the Answer coordinator cares about me and wants me to do my best.	39. I The best thing about Violence is NOT the Answer is?
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	0, 1, 2, 3 or more	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Open ended question.
25. In the last week, when adults asked me to stop talking, I stopped right away.	30. I have tried to do better in school (grades or behavior or attitude) since joining Violence is NOT the Answer.	35. I can talk to the Violence is NOT the Answer Coordinator about my problem and issues.	40. What I have leaned in Violence is NOT the Answer is…
Rarely or Not at All, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always	Open ended question.

Appendix B: Outcomes of VINTA Premiere Awards

The event consisted of 13 musical, artistic, video, dance and dramatic performances that sent pro-peace messages, in addition to presenting the outstanding VINTA participants at each school. The program started by having a moment of silence for the victims of violent acts. The first act of the program was two former Violence is NOT the Answer participants who had graduated high school the previous year. Their rap was entitled "What's Going On?" and focused on their confusion with the violence issues nation-wide. The video that was shown after sent messages that were anti-fighting. In particular, the students made the point that there is "nothing funny about a fight" and encouraged others to "kill [othes] with kindness" instead of with violence. One of the musical acts focused on African Drumming and rhythmic poetry: "peace is powerful/peace is beautiful/peace needs everybody/peace needs you and me/we're too good for violence." The next video presentation taught the audience how to react in a stressful situation using the "TAG" method. This requires **t**hinking, turning the situation **a**round, and letting **g**o. This particular presentation was produced by the School for the Blind. According to the emcees, VINTA does their peacemaker training at this school so that the messages of violence-free living can permeate throughout the entire county's community. Some of the other skits were about "taking a chill pill" during a fight in order to stay calm, hearing both sides of the story, sharing opinions and finding safe solutions; another skit warned the audience against the problems that text messaging has with promoting violence due to impersonal communication and mixed-messages that arise. Two different art pieces were displayed: one that asked people to "plant peace, not violence" and one that told everyone that "peace is powerful". Finally, the step team performed their routine while chanting "non-violence for me, no more violence now".

Overall, the event appeared to be successful, but because the event was for more than just the two middle school programs, the impact it had on the sample is unknown. The participation at

both schools was very low for this event. At Miami, 25% of the sample and 19.3% of the total recorded cases participated in the event; at Alexander, 20% of the sample and 23.9% of the total recorded cases participated in the event.

Appendix C: Full List of Developmental Assets for Ages 8-12

	External Assets		Internal Assets
1.	Family Support	21.	Achievement motivation
2.	Positive family communication	22.	Learning engagement
3.	Other adult relationships	23.	Homework
4.	Caring neighborhood	24.	Bonding to school
5.	Caring school climate	25.	Reading for pleasure
6.	Parent involvement in schooling	26.	Caring
7.	Community values youth	27.	Equality and social justice
8.	Children as resources	28.	Integrity
9.	Service to others	29.	Honesty
10.	Safety	30.	Responsibility
11.	Family boundaries	31.	Healthy lifestyle
12.	School boundaries	32.	Planning and decision making
13.	Neighborhood boundaries	33.	Interpersonal competence
14.	Adult role models	34.	Cultural competence
15.	Positive peer influence	35.	Resistance skills
16.	High expectations	36.	Peaceful conflict resolution
17.	Creative activities	37.	Personal power
18.	Child programs	38.	Self-esteem
19.	Religious community	39.	Sense of purpose
20.	Time at home	40.	Positive view of personal future